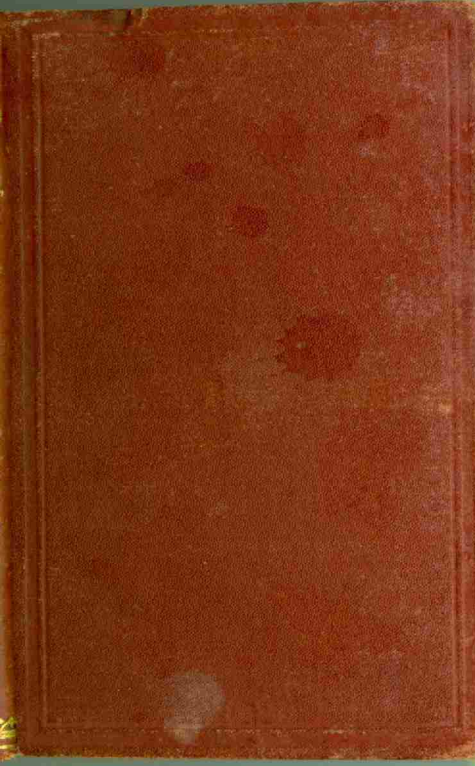


RAGGED

HOMES

AND HOW  
TO MEND  
THEM.





Ms D<sup>r</sup> Warfield





"Whatever you may think of it, Jann, I mean you to stop there  
two years." p. 201.



# RAGGED HOMES

AND

## HOW TO MEND THEM.

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"Whosoever ye WILL ye may do them good."—MARK xiv. 7.

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## NOTE TO THIS EDITION.

THERE are few subjects that have a closer relation to the peace and good order of society than the habits and habitations of those who are found in the lowly walks of life. Such of us as are called to take an active part in the management of our Refuges and Homes for the Poor and Friendless, and whose official duty it is to sit, week after week, and listen to tales of domestic wretchedness and suffering which are there recited, have some conception of the nature and extent of the evils and distresses of poverty and vice combined. But it is only those who go up into the narrow and dirty loft, or down into the damp and loathsome cellar, and learn by the sickening testimony of their senses what the "homes" of

many of the poor really are, that can justly appreciate the difficulty or the merit of efforts made for their relief.

There are multitudes of really poor families who live comfortably and respectably. By industry, temperance and the most rigid frugality, they manage to keep soul and body together; and it is only when some sudden calamity overtakes them, as sickness, or the privation of some limb or sense, that they feel the need of aid from without. And such aid is never withheld when a call for it is seasonably made. But there is another, and a large multitude, degraded, debased, brutalized, and seemingly incapable of improvement, some of whom may have seen better days perhaps, and have been reduced to rags and wretchedness by the demon of strong drink, who has taken possession of one or both parents, while others have never known what cleanliness or comfort is. They have sunk lower and lower in the social scale, until they are scarcely distinguishable (except by form and articulate speech)

from the dogs and pigs and cats that dwell with them.

We have secular schools and Sunday-schools, churches, and ministers of the gospel, an unlettered Bible, and liberty of conscience, and yet hundreds of thousands of men and women, youth and children, are found on our soil as ignorant of God, of his will, of the principles of moral duty, and of their own immortal nature and destiny, as the Hottentot or the Fijian. With all the opportunities and advantages of learning which are within reach, boys and girls grow up without a knowledge of reading or writing; and their parents think almost as little of their intellectual and moral improvement as if they were horses or mules.

It is maintained that this condition of things is not inevitable. Important inroads have been made already upon this dark and revolting territory. The counsel and sympathy of the wise and good have penetrated through as thick a coating of ignorance and prejudice as covers any human mind. Multitudes of chil-

dren have been rescued from the dark and dismal dens of squalid vice and abject poverty, and transplanted to good homes. What has been successfully done on a small scale can be extended (if sufficient means are furnished) to fill and bless a larger sphere. And one of the most hopeful forms of accomplishing this beneficent work is that to which the present volume chiefly relates.

It is amazing how strong is the tie which binds one to the most uninviting *home*. And so far as that instinctive attachment can be cherished consistently with the welfare of the party concerned, it should be preserved as the most sensitive medium by which to introduce wholesome and elevating influences into the household.

We often hastily condemn as faults, if not as sins, those neglects and perversions from which poverty and misery most frequently spring. We are but partially informed of the history and circumstances of the fallen, or we should, probably, be more slow to cast stones

at them. If we can enlighten ignorance and correct misapprehensions, while we encourage efforts and supply motives to improvement, we shall accomplish much more for them than by any direct ministration to their support or relief. The claims of actual hunger and nakedness, cold and sickness, are not to be denied, whatever our theories may be; but true economy and true humanity concur in the doctrine that protection *against* poverty is incomparably better than provision *for* it.

The scenes and localities of the present volume require little if any modification to make them exact counterparts of those with which our City Missionaries, our District Visitors, and our Mission (or Ragged) School teachers are familiar. St. Giles, the Five Points, Bedford or Baker Streets, are only names of different localities that possess the same general features. If the admirable tact and judgment, and especially the EMINENT EVANGELICAL SPIRIT, which characterize the measures detailed in these pages, shall furnish

hints or motives to the like efforts in similar sections of our own cities, the purpose of republishing the volume will be answered.

The following paragraphs from the preface to the original work fully and eloquently express the author's views :—

“The condition of the young, and the education of children, naturally engaged the earliest attention of social reformers. Experience has shown the importance of genial influences at home, and that it is *necessary* to improve the homes of the poor, in order to save the children from destruction. It has also been found that *much* can be thus effected. Poor women, who have been subjected to the severe discipline of a struggling existence, are often willing and anxious listeners to useful instruction, and are perhaps more susceptible of good influence than younger persons who have not felt the necessity for improvement. There is, therefore, room to hope that the influence which can be brought to bear upon the mothers of the working-classes will be a most



important element in that general elevation which it is our desire to attain.

“It was principally owing to this impression, and also the great desire which I felt to do something, however feeble, to bring more happiness and comfort into the houses of my poor neighbours, that induced me, five or six years ago, to commence a Mothers' Society. The usual ways of helping the poor seemed to me to effect little real good. The nice soup sent for the sick man was spoiled by being smoked in the warming up, or by the taste infused into it from the dirty saucepan; the sago intended for the infant was burnt, or only half cooked; and medicine and food alike failed to be efficacious in the absence of cleanliness, and in the stifling air which the poor patient was doomed to breathe. The mothers of the little, thin, fretful babies would complain to me that they could not think why the child did so badly, for they managed to get a rasher of bacon for it whenever they could, and always fed it two or three times in the night.

I saw that the wise man was indeed right in saying that 'knowledge is the principal thing;' and that if I could help them in any way to 'get knowledge,' it would be a gift far surpassing in value any thing else I could offer them. The applications constantly made to me for information on the best modes of establishing and conducting these societies induce me to suppose that they have taken some hold on the public mind, and that these institutions supply a want that is every day increasingly felt.

"But the principal motives in my own mind for sending these simple narratives forth into the world is the hope that more attention than ever may, by their means, be directed to that great and difficult subject, the improvement of the homes of the poor. As a few notes of a bird, the lisping of a child, the sound of the wind dying away, have sometimes been sufficient to awaken the spirit of harmony in some master-mind, and so led to the composition of the music which has thrilled and delighted all

who have heard it, so it is hoped the suggestions here made may be of use to many minds, and that any thing already effected may be as the drop to the showers, or as the first buds of spring to the luxuriance of summer."

May it please "Him from whom all holy desires, all good counsels and all just works do proceed," to make this volume the means of awakening new interest and inspiring new zeal for the physical, moral and religious improvement of the HOMES of the POOR!

P.

## CONTENTS.

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|                                 | PAGE |
|---------------------------------|------|
| INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.....       | 17   |
| CHAPTER I.                      |      |
| A VILLAGE—NOT PICTURESQUE.....  | 37   |
| CHAPTER II.                     |      |
| ILLUSTRATIONS OF CHARACTER..... | 58   |
| CHAPTER III.                    |      |
| SLOW ADVANCING.....             | 84   |
| CHAPTER IV.                     |      |
| SOWING SEED.....                | 108  |
| CHAPTER V.                      |      |
| HOMES AND NO HOMES.....         | 138  |
| CHAPTER VI.                     |      |
| DIFFICULTIES.....               | 158  |

## CHAPTER VII.

|                           | PAGE |
|---------------------------|------|
| GIVING AND RECEIVING..... | 178  |

## CHAPTER VIII.

|                                |     |
|--------------------------------|-----|
| LIGHT UPON A DARK SUBJECT..... | 193 |
|--------------------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER IX.

|                       |     |
|-----------------------|-----|
| OUR MISSIONARIES..... | 214 |
|-----------------------|-----|

## CHAPTER X.

|               |     |
|---------------|-----|
| OUR BABY..... | 238 |
|---------------|-----|

## CHAPTER XI.

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| LETTERS..... | 253 |
|--------------|-----|

## CHAPTER XII.

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| OBSTACLES: WHO SHALL REMOVE THEM?..... | 280 |
|--|-----|

BY REV. J. W. BENTLEY

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## INTRODUCTORY.

"Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore  
Of nicely calculated less and more."

WORDSWORTH.

A FEW weeks ago I was visiting the library in the British Museum. Two gentlemen, who stood near me, appeared very earnest in the pursuit of something which they wanted. Presently, by an exclamation of delight, I understood that their search had been successful. They had found what they had sought. And what had they found? A very old book, so badly printed as to be read with difficulty, and containing information of what must have taken place at least two thousand years ago,—information very interesting and important to the old Romans, no doubt, and which would have been still more so if they could have foreseen what delight it would have imparted, centuries later, to two inhabitants of a remote island in the North, then scarcely known. But so it is: some minds prefer to

dwell on the past; others live in the present; and some seem of opinion that "man never is, but always *to be*, blest." This diversity is, no doubt, necessary. All do some good. The antiquarian adds to the interest of our libraries, if not of our lives; and we owe much to those who teach us to look forward, if they will only at the same time help us to look upward. But to such as wish to *do* something, who desire to have an influence on the great living history which every day is writing afresh, the passing events of the time have the greatest charm, because they not only present food for reflection, but opportunity for exertion.

We not unfrequently hear people speak of life in such a way as would lead us to suppose that there had been some mistake as to the date of their birth. Had they come a little earlier or a little later, it would have been different; but the present seems to afford them no object of interest. They complain of intolerable dullness,—the weariness of life; and in watching the cheerless, the objectless existence of such people, we wonder that it is recorded of only a single individual that one morning he shot himself, for the reason assigned

on a slip of paper which he had left on the dressing-table:—"I am tired of living only to breakfast, dine and sup."

I have often thought, when listening to such complaints, of the prayer of Elisha for his unbelieving servant:—"Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see;" and if the Lord would do for them as he did for this servant, and open their eyes,—not to see "mountains full of horses and chariots of fire" waiting to deliver them, but alleys and lanes and villages full of the needy and the sick, waiting for loving hearts and kind hands to come and help them to rise from their degradation, wretchedness and filth,—the strain would be changed; and in the contemplation of such a vast amount of labour, followed by such rich reward, we should rather expect to hear, if it must still be the language of complaint,—

"O wretched yet inevitable spite  
Of our short span! and we must yield our breath,  
And wrap us in the lazy coil of death,  
So much remaining of unproved delight!"

There are many indications in the present day that the fields are "white unto the harvest." Several things, that were looked



upon some years ago as experiments, have been so eminently successful that no unprejudiced mind can doubt that they are the means which God has blessed, and by which he intends to accomplish a great work of reformation. It was a glorious sight, lately, at St. Martin's Hall (London), when five hundred and sixty-seven young persons came forward to claim the prize for having remained a twelvemonth in their places; and, were it not for the strictness of the rules, excluding all apprentices, requiring a written character from a master or mistress, it was stated that as many as fifteen hundred would have been present. All these had been rescued from wellnigh certain destruction by the Ragged School, and had there received the education which qualified them to take these situations. There must have been joy in the presence of the angels of God that night, as they witnessed these rescued ones sitting together and listening eagerly to words by which their souls might live, and which, if the prayers of many there were answered, would prepare them to receive an incorruptible prize,—a crown that can never fade away.

Whilst these facts convey resistless evi-

dence to the mind that these poor outcasts can be lifted out of their wretchedness and be saved, the conviction deepens that God will hold us responsible to do this work; and, in the various labours required of our hands, it has never been more necessary than now that whosoever would engage in it must be taught of the Lord. We have to pray not only that the Lord of the harvest would send more labourers into the harvest, but also that he would endow them with just the spirit and power necessary for this particular work.

In noticing the physical wants and requirements of the country, nothing strikes us more forcibly than the certainty with which the demand creates the supply. No matter how intricate and complicated the required machinery may be, heads are always found to invent and hands to work it. In fact, the degree of perfection attained in this way is enough to make us "proud of the age we live in." If machinery and steam-power had been the agency required to elevate and purify wretched and degraded portions of the community, the work would have been done long ago. They have not remained so long "like blots in this fair world," without being thought of and

cared for. Many politicians and scientific men have asked, earnestly, "What can be done?" and have turned away hopelessly, feeling that the mighty intellect which could subdue air, earth and sea had now met with something beyond its power; and still the question remained unanswered, "What can be done?"

One of the most interesting discoveries of the past few years has been that the humblest instead of the grandest agency is required to accomplish this work which the wisest heads have found so difficult. A little sketch of the early history of one of God's most successful agents will show that "his thoughts are not as our thoughts;" for it would not have entered into the heart of man to have suggested such a preparation for usefulness. "A drunken father, who broke his wife's heart, had brought a young girl of fifteen, gradually down, down from the privileges of a respectable station, to dwell in a low lodging-house in London. The father died shortly afterwards, and left her and a sister five years of age, orphans in the midst of pollution, which they, as by miracle, escaped, often sitting on the stairs or door-step

all night to avoid what was to be seen within. An old man, the fellow-lodger of the children, and kind-hearted, though an atheist, had taught the elder to write a little, but bade her never read the Bible, since it was full of lies, and that she had only to look around her to see that there was no God. She had learned to read and knit from looking continually at the shop-windows. At eighteen years of age, she married her present husband, and for the first time in her young memory knew the meaning of that blessed word, 'home;' although the home was but a room, changed from time to time in the same neighbourhood. After many years of considerable suffering from loss of children, ill health, and other calamities, she took shelter one rainy night in an alley which led up to a little Mission Hall in Dudley Street. She entered, and heard it announced that books would be lent, on the next evening, from a newly-formed library for the poor at that place. Going early, she was the first claimant of the promise. She had determined to borrow 'Uncle Tom's Cabin;' but a strong impulse came over her, which she could not resist: it was as if she had heard it whispered, 'Do not borrow "Uncle Tom;" borrow a

Bible. So she asked for a Bible. 'A Bible, my good woman?' was the missionary's reply. 'We do not lend Bibles from this library; but wait: I will fetch you one. It is a token for good that the book of God, the best of books, should be the first one asked for and lent from this place.' He brought her the Bible, and asked if he should call and read a chapter with her. She said, respectfully, 'No, sir, thank you: we are very quiet folk: my husband might not like it. I will take the book, and read it for myself.' The Lord's time had come. His message then first entered her house, and went straight to her heart. The divine Spirit applied the word with power; and the arrow of conviction was ere long driven home by suffering and affliction.

"A severe illness laid her prostrate, and to this hour she feels—in a way that we who help her in her work cannot feel—what is meant by sickness and poverty coming together."

This was God's method to prepare for himself an agent to carry out his purposes of mercy. By uniting the introduction of God's word with care for the temporal wants of the

poor people around her, Marian has been able to accomplish wonders in two short years. But something more than facts, valuable as they are, has been deduced from Marian's mission. The lock that refused to be picked has yielded to the fitting key. We have sat in our beautiful churches long enough, and wished we could see the poor gathered around us; but they have not come. We have written numberless words of advice to them from our comfortable houses; and though all these efforts have, doubtless, accomplished good, especially among a particular class,—for no word of truth falls to the ground,—yet all will acknowledge that they have in a great measure failed to affect the masses of our poor people; and, had it not been for our City Missionary and Ragged School, it is dreadful to think what would have become of the ever-increasing population of this crowded city. Our missionaries have done much; the moral atmosphere is always improved by their presence; and thousands of poor wanderers from God have, through their teaching, found their way back to peace and holiness. The Ragged Schools have rescued thousands of poor outcasts from destruction. But neither of these

agencies operate directly upon the homes of the poor, though "the entrance" of that word which "giveth light" seldom fails to shed its influence on the exterior.

My acquaintance with the poor began very early. My father's house stood alone, surrounded by beautiful lawns, wood and water. Our nearest neighbours were the poor people in a village about five minutes' walk from our home. Most of them were simple labouring-people, and, as children, we were trusted to go among them without much superintendence from our elders. Our dear mother often employed us on errands of mercy to them; and as soon as we could read well enough, we were sometimes sent to cheer the solitary hours of some poor sick person by reading to him. Our relations to each other were so kind and pleasant that we always met with a hearty welcome; and for years I believe I knew something about the interior of every cottage in the place. I remember even then feeling astonished at the wretched management I saw, especially with regard to children; and, as we did not live in any fear of one another, I sometimes took upon myself to remark to the "gudewife" that so and so was

never done at home. All this was taken in good part: the reply was generally a laugh, and "Law, my dear, poor people's children isn't like gentlefolk's;" or, if my observations extended to cooking or house-cleaning, it was, "Law bless you, you doesn't know any thing about that: gentlefolks never does." Notwithstanding all these rebukes, I still thought over these things, and have thought over them, to a greater or less extent, ever since; and the result is the deliberate conviction that so long as the WIVES and MOTHERS of the poor continue such as we generally find them, we cannot look for any very great improvement in their social position.

I have known many women, under thirty years of age, with six or eight children, so totally unqualified for almost every thing which they had to do, that I have wondered how they managed to exist at all. I am now, of course, speaking of those below the class from which we usually obtain our domestic servants; and among this class, more unfit than any other for life's solemn duties, the earliest marriages are contracted, apparently without any idea that at least as much preparation is



needed as is deemed necessary for breaking up stones on a public road.

If a lady feels herself unequal to the management of her family, she can call in the aid of nurses, governesses and schools; and thus her defects may in some measure be made up by assistance from without. But who or what is to step in between the poor mother and her children? If she cannot train them during the first few years of infancy, they remain untrained; and not only are the wise man's words proved true, that "a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame," but it is found that the multiplication of these families thus left to themselves bringeth a nation to shame. When we look honestly at things as they are, we have no right to be much surprised at such a result: it is unreasonable to expect to reap what has never been sown. Seven years of careful training is not thought too much for those who are to be employed in the making of our shoes, our coats, or in the building of our houses. The education of the men of this country is generally, from a very early age, adapted to their future employments. Hence, as might be expected, there is no lack of skilful artisans,

who have, often, a higher character for skill than for goodness. But the girl, who is to grow up to exercise an influence upon persons more than upon things, is left to scramble on as best she can, generally content to do as badly as those who have preceded her; and yet, in the words of one who has thought and written much upon the subject, "It is to the poor man's wife that we must chiefly look when we indulge the hope of reducing that frightful amount of crime which, with all our inventions, discoveries and improvements, sometimes awakens a fear that we may not really be in so prosperous a condition, socially and nationally, as our rapid progress in what is called civilization would lead a superficial observer to suppose."

I have never yet been able to see how schools, or any system of national education, could meet this difficulty. That we should be much worse than we are without them, there cannot be a doubt. Our beautiful Infant Schools especially, that shelter these little ones so many hours a day from the sight and the sound of evil, call for special thanksgiving to God. To no class of people in this country are we more indebted than to those

high-minded Christian teachers who, with infinite patience and self-denial, manage to infuse into their teaching such freshness, purity and wondrous adaptation that many a little rebel is, through them, brought back to allegiance. The preparation for life that boys likewise require can, to some considerable extent, be supplied from without; but to girls, whose education is valuable in proportion as it prepares them for domestic duties, nothing can ever compensate for the absence of home-training. The question then arises, considering that nineteen such girls out of twenty do not receive a proper home-training, what is the best substitute for it? Until some remedy for so great an evil can be found, this misery and misfortune must continue. I do not pretend to answer this question satisfactorily. I rather wish to obtain for it the attention of wiser and clearer heads, believing that nothing can, at the present time, exceed it in importance. The few suggestions I have to make are very simple, and cannot be considered comprehensive enough to meet such a widely-extended evil. If we were to see seven people struggling in the water, and could only save one from drowning, we could not plead as an

excuse for neglecting to help that one, our inability to rescue the other six. In like manner we must use the little light that is given to us, trusting that, as we advance, more light will be granted.

That which we propose to substitute should resemble, as nearly as possible, the home-training which we find to be so sadly deficient. These poor girls require friends who will supply to them the place of mothers. Much has been said and written about ladies devoting their leisure time to the poor, and there is no doubt that much more good might be done by them in this way than is done; but the work we refer to demands something far beyond the occasional call, the book lent, and the garment cut out.

There are so many points of difference between the child reared in the mansions of the wealthy, and the uncared-for, friendless infant picked out of the streets and alleys, that it is not strange if they should have few thoughts in common. It is true there is in some hearts, as in that of Elizabeth Fry, a sympathy strong enough to extend itself to every thing with which it comes in contact. The moral power of such natures is very great. They are among

God's best gifts to this fallen world, yet not the most common. In devising schemes of improvement, we cannot, therefore, rely upon the powerful assistance which they give; nor must we take it for granted that our plans will be worked out by their aid. Probably the best suggestion that has been offered hitherto is that some of the best of the poor women, superintended by ladies, should be employed as missionaries, and that each missionary should be the mistress of a house, into which a number of homeless girls might be received on payment of a small weekly sum. Here, under motherly training, they might be fitted for their future duties.

The Marian above alluded to, soon after the commencement of her work, says, "I long to lift poor young girls, from twelve to eighteen years of age, out of the horrors of those overcrowded rooms; and how glad I should be to take a house and make a dormitory for them by themselves! I know forty who would come to me at once, and pay threepence a night each. They could well afford it, and it would take the money from those dancing-rooms and casinos to which they flock to their ruin. What new thoughts I might put into their

minds in the evening! How I might read the Bible with them! And some of them might help me in my other work. There is no provision of the sort for the class I mean; and they are those who most want it. Such a change would be to them the beginning of a new life; and there are perhaps five thousand of those girls always growing up in a single locality."

But how inadequate, some will say, are these means to meet so extensive an evil! To provide for forty out of five thousand is of little avail. So indeed it appears, if we look merely on the surface of this great subject. But it must never be forgotten that every individual is a centre of influence. It is a proverb that "one sickly sheep infects the flock;" but happily this law of infection is not always on the side of evil; and, I believe, the force of example is stronger in the class to which I am now referring, than among the reading and thinking people in a higher grade of society. "I thought he was right at first," (a lady once said to me;) "but when I sat down by the fire quietly in the evening with my Bible, and listened to the voice within, as well as to the teaching of the word, I then saw it all in a different light; and I resolved, more firmly

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than I had ever done before, that God should be my guide, and not man."

But we are not speaking of the few who sit quietly by their fireside in the evening to weigh the actions of the day in the balance of truth. We refer to the multitude whose rule of conduct is summed up in the words, "Follow your leader." True, they do not always follow the same leader; and the defection of a comrade will cause them to halt. Yet after a time they are found walking behind another guide. They are contented even if he choose the old path. But, whether old or new, they cannot advance without guidance. To such, accustomed only to "move all together if they move at all," we would commend the great truth that God can work by and for the few as well as for the many,—that he is often content with small beginnings where we should have expected mighty achievements. This lesson we learn from our Saviour's teaching.

He often spoke to large audiences, but he never refrained because his listeners were few. What minister charged with such a message as, "Whosoever drinketh the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a

well of water springing up into everlasting life," would have told it for the first time to a poor sinful woman whom he met by the wayside? Would he not rather have reasoned that his church must be unusually full before such a wonderful message could be delivered? Surely many "masters of Israel" should have been present to hear the answer to the question that has vexed and troubled the church in all ages, as to where and how the Father was to be worshipped. But no: the same wondering woman, standing with her water-pitcher in her hand, was taught that neither exclusively "in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem" was the Father to be worshipped, but that "the true worshippers worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Jesus knew she would go on her way and stop every one she met, to repeat what she had heard, and say, "Come, see a man who told me all things that ever I did." This, too, is our hope, when the thought depresses us, that these small means can never affect such masses of evil. Each rescued soul becomes a light set upon a hill, that cannot be hid, and many will make use of this light to guide themselves out of darkness.

Let those who are actively and successfully



engaged in their own peculiar duties spare a little time to assist their less gifted or less fortunate neighbours. Let those who are weary of doing nothing assist those who are weak and weary with doing too much. Let those who are strong aid those whose burden of life is too heavy for them to bear. And let us all seek to fulfil the great Christian command,—which should be the bane of selfishness, and must be the foundation of social elevation,—“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

## CHAPTER I.

## A VILLAGE—NOT PICTURESQUE.

"Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

THE wish of the child for a picture of the story which has interested him expresses a feeling which is found in those of maturer years. "Where did this happen?" is the question sure to follow a narrative that has awakened sympathy. We realize the truth of a description more forcibly when we have given to it "a local habitation and a name." In the present instance there is more than the usual reason for detail. Characteristic peculiarities belong both to the place and the people whom I am about to describe. Origin, occupation and habits will, to a great extent, account for much that would otherwise require explanation. Without a due regard to these particulars, much labour is lost in working among the poor. We know that the seed which flourishes in one soil, and brings forth

fruit to perfection, will scarcely live in another; and as every successful gardener considers both ground and plant, so every labourer in the human soil is careful to adapt means to ends, or his toil is fruitless.

Inasmuch as there has always been a demand for pig's flesh, at least among Christians, it is impossible to determine for how long pig-feeding establishments have been thought necessary for the neighbourhood of London. In all probability, they had their origin at a very early date, and can claim to be ranked among the "time-honoured institutions" of this great city.\*

But we are not able to go back much further than sixty years, when we find that this necessary evil had for some time been located near the ground now covered by three squares. Here the nuisance was supposed to be out of town, and the swinish tribe luxuriated in this dry and elevated region. If there had been found at that time a registrar-general to note down the deaths and diseases of pigs, the records would excite the envy of swine in the present generation, and induce the sad belief

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\* They are no unusual appendages to the principal cities of the United States, though prohibited by law.

that the former times *were* better than these. But these respectable animals of the past century had apparently another cause for congratulation. Their society seemed eagerly sought by the great London world; and, seeing how perseveringly they were followed, they could proudly boast that they were leading the metropolis "by the nose." Such a soothing idea was, however, dispelled, when conviction was unwillingly forced upon them that there was a general desire to get rid of them as *near* neighbours, and that their room was more highly esteemed than their company.

The ground which these pigs occupied had become too valuable for them to remain there in peace. I have not been able to discover whether they were expelled by purchase or ejection; but it is certain that, about the period I have named, they were compelled to go in search of a new home.

About that time, a man named Lake, a chimney-sweep and scavenger, who lived in Tottenham Court Road, became, from the nature of his occupation, so obnoxious to his neighbours that he, too, was compelled to take himself off to a fresh locality. My informant

told me he was determined to go at once far enough out of London. He thought three miles in a westerly direction would make him safe, and, finding a spot that suited him, he secured a lease of the land, and removed himself and his appendages to a place now generally known as the "Potteries." Here, for a short time, he enjoyed almost a solitary life. The population of the place, for the first year or two, consisted of only three persons. Whatever he may have suffered from loneliness was, no doubt, abundantly made up to him by a sense of freedom, and an absence from all restraint; for his neighbours were distant and few. At length, finding he could not use all the land he had leased, he naturally looked about for some one to share it with him. Alas! he was not company for every one. Eventually he heard of a man named Stephens, a bow-string maker, who, from the unsavoury nature of his trade, was enduring a persecution similar to that from which he himself had escaped. Lake invited this man to become his neighbour; and Stephens eventually purchased from him the lease of a plot of land for five hundred dollars, and removed his bow-string establishment to this new locality.

Perhaps he did not find it answer to carry on his business so far from town. This does not appear in the narrative; but it is certain that, for some reason, he soon relinquished it, and commenced pig-keeping instead,—probably for the same reason as the bone-picker assigned for his attachment to his trade,—that he shouldn't think it was all right unless he could "feel a smell."

In his inquiries after pigs, &c., he became acquainted with several persons who desired to share the refuge which he and his friend Lake had found. The offer was gladly accepted, and many either bought or rented small plots of land from the original proprietors, and removed their establishments of pigs and children to this favoured spot, where Lake assured them everybody should do as they liked, and "he'd see that nobody meddled with them."

Under this magnificent charter and spirited government, the little colony progressed rapidly, and numbers of houses, or rather huts, sprang up on all sides. Such things as drainage and fresh water were considered superfluous; and the accumulation of the filth of years rendered it certain that nothing would

be meddled with by those who regarded the simple law of self-preservation.

In addition to the above-mentioned trades, about thirty years ago a considerable plot of land was bought for brick-making, the soil being almost entirely composed of stiff clay, peculiarly adapted for that purpose. This introduced another fresh element into the newly-formed colony. The labourers employed at this work are not usually of a very high class, and the oldest inhabitants of the Potteries speak of their introduction as an evil. An old woman, who had lived forty years in the place (and her husband's parents were among the first inhabitants), remarked,—

“Now, pig-keepers *is* respectable; but them brick people, they bean't, some of them, no wiser than the clay they works on.”

I asked this old woman what kind of a life they had lived there by themselves so many years.

“Oh, ma'am,” said she, “you'd think 'twas an awful life! The only difference in Sundays and work-days was, that on Sundays we had cock-fighting and bull-baiting, and lots of dogs were kept on purpose to amuse the people by fighting and rat-killing. People all

round were afraid of these dogs, and nobody ever cared to come nigh the place. We didn't ourselves venture out after it was dark; if we hadn't got in all we wanted before night, why, we jist went without it: for besides the dogs, d'ye see, ma'am, there was the roads; least-wise, we called 'em roads, but they worn't for all that,—it was jist a lot of ups and downs, and when you had put one foot down, you didn't know how to pull the other one up. Once, I mind, I happened to be out late in the evening, and had to go through Cut-throat Lane jist as it was getting dark (they calls that Pottery Lane now, you know, ma'am): I heard some people coming along, fighting and swearing, and I was so frightened I got down into the bottom of one of the ruts, and there I stopped till they had gone: so I got a service out of them that time, d'ye see, ma'am.

“We had no near neighbours for a long time: there was a farm-house where the Mitre Tavern now stands, and I can mind, when I have been passing by, seeing the men stacking the hay and the corn, and hearing them singing over their work. Then there was another farm-house, down where the Royal Crescent is now; and sometimes I have been there for



a drop of milk, for we hadn't no shops for a long time."

I knew that my communicative old woman had been a good Christian character for many years: so I asked her how she, as an individual, had managed to pass her Sundays in this dark place, before there were either schools or places of worship of any kind there.

"Why, ma'am," she replied, "I never would work of a Sunday: nobody couldn't make me. I used to tidy up my house after breakfast, and put the saucepan by the fire, and then I went over to the old church at Kensington. The people now and then threw stones at me, and used to threaten to set the dogs at me; but they never did,—the Lord didn't let 'em; and they knew me, too, that I'd be torn in pieces before I'd give up what I knew to be right."

I was astonished at the immense numbers of pigs which these people seemed to keep, and I asked the old woman how they managed to find food for them all. She said,—

"We most of us keep a horse, or a donkey and cart, and we go round early in the morning to the gentlefolk's houses, and collect the *refuges* from the kitchens. When we comes

home, we sorts it out: the best of it we eats ourselves, or sells it to a neighbour; the fat is all boiled down, and the rest we gives to the pigs."

"Do you go to the same houses every day?" I asked.

"Why, you see, ma'am, that depends upon how much *refuge* they have. When they have lots of company, then they gets a deal of *refuge*. I have been to the Duke of —, whenever he has been in town, for the last thirty years. Last week one of his daughters was married, and the house was full all the week: then there was plenty for me. But, do you know, ma'am, for all I've been in the habit of going backwards and forwards to that house so many years, them servants, that they have now, never had the manners to give me a bit of bride-cake. I couldn't help speaking about it. I says to them, 'Well, this is something to think! I have been tending on the duke this thirty years, and can't get a bit of bride-cake when his daughter is married!' Of course that wasn't the duke's fault, you see, ma'am: it was all a-hocing to them servants. When the families goes out of town, the servants is put upon board wages, and

they skrimps and saves every thing; we a'n't wanted to call then, 'cause there's not a scrap left for us. Oh, no: it a'n't no use then."

Although, as years rolled on, London continued to come farther out of town, till those pig-feeders found themselves again surrounded by streets, squares and terraces inhabited by the "quality," little attention was directed to the place till the visitation of the cho'ra in 1849. Then the eyes of the newly-arrived were opened, and many were horrified at discerning what a plague-spot they had among them.

In one of the first numbers of "Household Words" the following passages appeared, which at once brought the place into notice; and plans for its improvement were publicly discussed:—

"In a neighbourhood studded thickly with elegant villas and mansions, viz., Bayswater and Notting Hill, in the parish of Kensington, is a plague-spot, scarcely equalled for its insalubrity by any other in London: it is called the Potteries. It comprises some seven or eight acres, with about two hundred and sixty houses (if the term can be applied to such hovels), and a population of nine hun-

dred or one thousand. The occupation of the inhabitants is principally pig-fattening. Many hundreds of pigs, ducks and fowls are kept in an incredible state of filth. Dogs abound, for the purpose of guarding the swine. The atmosphere is still further polluted by the process of fat-boiling. In these hovels, discontent, dirt, filth and misery are unsurpassed by any thing known even in Ireland. Water is supplied to only a small number of the houses. There are foul ditches, open sewers and defective drains, smelling most offensively and generating large quantities of poisonous gases; stagnant water is found at every turn; not a drop of clean water can be obtained; all is charged to saturation with putrescent matter. Wells have been sunk on some of the premises, but they have become, in many instances, useless, from organic matter soaking into them. In some of the wells the water is perfectly black and fetid. The paint on the window-frames has become black from the action of sulphuretted hydrogen gas. Nearly all the inhabitants look unhealthy: the women, especially, complain of sickness and want of appetite; their eyes are sunken, and their skin shrivelled.

“The poisonous influence of this pestilential locality extends far and wide. Some twelve or thirteen hundred feet off, there is a row of clean houses called Crafton Terrace; the situation, though rather low, is open and airy. On Saturday and Sunday, the 8th and 9th September, 1849, the inhabitants complained of an intolerable stench, the wind then blowing directly upon the Terrace from the Potteries. Up to this time, there had been no case of cholera among the inhabitants; but the next day the disease broke out virulently; and on the following day, the 11th of September, a child died of cholera at No. 1. By the 22d of the same month, no less than seven persons in the Terrace lost their lives by this fatal malady.”

It will be supposed that, after this, the law of self-preservation induced the surrounding inhabitants to be very urgent with the parochial and all other officials who had any authority in the place. In a short time a good road was made, and supplies of fresh water were introduced. The drainage was found very difficult, from the low level of the ground; and it certainly could not have been thoroughly completed; for in the report on

the sanitary condition of the parish for the year 1856, by the Medical Officer of Health, the following passages appear:—

“One of the most deplorable spots, not only in Kensington, but in the whole metropolis, is the Potteries at Notting Dale,—a locality which is, from its position, difficult to drain. It occupies eight or nine acres of ground, and contains about one thousand inhabitants, the majority of whom obtain a living by rearing and fattening pigs upon the house-refuse obtained from club-houses and hotels, and upon offals, entrails, liver and blood from slaughter-houses. This offensive food, often in a high state of decomposition when brought to the place, is boiled down in coppers and the fat separated for sale.

“The number of pigs varies from one thousand to two thousand (as many as three thousand have been kept), in filthy and badly-paved sties, close to the houses. The drainage, in nearly all cases very defective, permits the liquid manure to run over the yards, saturating the ground to a great depth, contaminating all the wells with putrid matter, and polluting the atmosphere for a con-

siderable distance around. There were, till lately, several immense accumulations of stagnant water, into which this pig-matter found its way. One immense pond, called the 'Ocean,' formerly occupied nearly an acre of ground; it was covered with filthy slime, and bubbling with poisonous gases, caused by the drainage of pig-sties, &c. flowing into it. Till lately, the want of water was most severely felt by the inhabitants, and even now many of the yards in which the pigs are kept are entirely destitute of it. Many of the houses are in a most dilapidated state. Old railway-carriages and worn-out travelling-vans may be seen taken off their wheels and converted into dwellings.

"The people in general look sallow and aged, the children pale and flabby, their eyes glistening as if stimulated by ammonia. Small-pox is ten times more fatal here than in any of the surrounding districts.

"The general annual death-rate varies from forty to sixty in every thousand. Of these deaths the very large proportion of eighty-seven and a half per cent. are under five years of age; and nearly all the deaths, I again

observe, occur from zymotic\* diseases. The most appalling fact, however, connected with this subject, and one most likely to make a deep sensation in the public mind, is that for a period of three years the average age at death is under twelve years!"

After this, great efforts were made to get rid of the "swinish multitude" altogether; but the shrewd chimney-sweep, Lake, seems to have foreseen this evil day, and "for the purpose of pig-keeping" had been inserted in the very leases which the people were able to produce: so that nothing but a special legislative act could remedy the existing evil. The number of animals was, however, somewhat reduced; and, by additional drainage and further supplies of fresh water, a decided improvement has been effected. The inhabitants have become much healthier, and for the last year or two the number of deaths has scarcely exceeded the common average.

So much for the physical aspect of the district. But another question arises, fraught with still greater interest. What has been

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\* A class of diseases produced by some unhealthy principle acting on the system like a ferment.



done for the people themselves? Surely the moral as well as the physical drainer has work to do here. However scanty may have been the supply of fresh water, the "water of life" was still more scarce. The road to heaven, though it had not to be made for them, had to be pointed out. In the almost entire absence of the observance of the Sabbath and of the means of grace, it is not surprising that a generation should have grown up without hope and without God in the world, and, to all outward appearance, "as far off by wicked works" as any of the heathen nations.

When, however, the place began to be frequented by the district visitor, it was found that a few even there had from the first feared and honoured God, had kept his Sabbaths in spite of all opposition; and though their cry had been, "Woe is me that I dwell in Meshech," yet they had held fast their integrity, and, in a few cases, had managed even to establish in their families the daily reading of the Bible, and united prayer. I have had the pleasure of conversing with some of these good people; and it might as truly be said of their moral standing as it was of Saul's natural height, that "from their shoul-

ders and upwards" they were higher than any of the people.

The first girls' school in the Potteries was established through the benevolent exertions of Lady Mary Fox. Some time after its foundation, a gentleman, who took a deep interest in the improvement of the district, presented a plot of ground on which a spacious national school-room was soon erected. It was, and is still (1859), surrounded by pigsties. St. James's Church was built in 1845, within a few minutes' walk of these school-rooms.

The first curate who was appointed entered at once upon his work in this deplorably destitute district, and, in spite of great difficulties, and frequent failures of health, from exposure to the damp and to the horrible pollutions and stench of the highways and byways, he has steadily worked on for twelve years. He has happily lived to see a great improvement since he commenced his labours, and he has won the respect and affection of the whole community. The old woman, from whose conversation I have before quoted, said, in speaking of him, " 'Twas the best day that ever rose in the Potteries when he came among

us; and, let who will come after him, *he'll* never be forgotten."

Another happy event was the appointment of a City Missionary, in the year 1850. It was pre-eminently the Christian Missionary that those people required. Their early habits, and also a spirit of lawlessness which seems one of their natural characteristics, made it difficult to persuade them to attend any place of worship. They had, indeed, to be "sought out."

Fortunately for this people, the missionary soon made himself thoroughly acquainted with the soil he had come to cultivate, and was enabled so to accommodate and adapt himself to its requirements that very little time was lost in getting to work. Had the case been otherwise, years might have passed in fruitless labour; but God gave to his servant a wise and an understanding heart, and by appearing to yield every thing he gained every thing. Among the many triumphs of missionary work, the Potteries must rank almost the highest. A contrast more striking could scarcely be imagined than that between the indifference, rudeness, and sometimes even execration, with which his first visits were re-

ceived, and the spontaneous respect which is now paid to him by every man, woman and child.

But other agencies for good have also been at work. The church and congregation assembling at Horbury Chapel directed their kind sympathies, and stretched out helping hands to cleanse this "Slough of Despond." A room was first hired in which to conduct a Sunday-school; but this was soon filled to overflowing, and it was proposed to build a chapel and school-room, and, by the exertion of kind and influential friends, the proposal was carried out, and the building was opened in 1852. An excellent master and mistress for the schools were secured: it is not too much to say that their influence for good is felt through the length and breadth of the district.

I was myself present at a meeting held at Kensington Chapel some time since, when a report of these schools was read. In describing the first gathering of the children, it was remarked that the scholars who regularly attended soon became orderly and attentive; the annoyance which was at first experienced arose not from them, but from the ragged, neglected children without, who for a

long time persisted in throwing stones, breaking windows, persecuting the scholars as they came and returned, and in other varieties of characteristic mischief. From these facts it was evident that, while the "aristocracy" of the Potteries had education provided for their children, there still existed an outlying juvenile population of young Ishmaelites, to reach whom some other means must be devised. After a short time, a room was hired, and a Ragged Evening School for girls was established; a Mothers' Class soon followed, then a Sunday Evening Ragged School for boys, a Working-Men's Association, and other like institutions. All these, from want of a suitable place for assembling, were maintained with considerable difficulty, and also with great expense. This want continued to be so increasingly felt that in June, 1855, a lady in the neighbourhood kindly convened a meeting of influential ladies and gentlemen at her house, to consider the possibility of erecting such a building. At this meeting the following resolutions were unanimously carried:—

"1st. That should such school-rooms be raised, they should be placed in trust of a committee of evangelical Christians, to con-

sist of members of the Church of England and Dissenters, in equal numbers.

"2d. That they should be for the benefit of four chief objects:—the Boys' Ragged School, the Girls' Ragged School, the Infant School, and the Mothers' Meetings.

"3d. It is also considered important that the use of the building should be granted for lectures, and for general educational purposes. The means of carrying out these resolutions are left for decision till a future meeting."

Upwards of five hundred dollars were subscribed on this occasion; but, though great exertions were made to obtain the requisite funds, it was not until March, 1858, that the committee considered that they had a sufficient amount in hand to warrant the prosecution of their design. In the list of contributors to the Building Fund will be found names of members of the Established Church, the Society of Friends, Independents, Wesleyans and Baptists. "It is the determination of the committee to carry out the first resolution in its strictest integrity, trusting that all the members will be enabled to act in harmonious concert in the one grand object of promoting the moral and religious training of the poor people of the Potteries."

## CHAPTER II.

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF CHARACTER.

"The same rains rain from heaven on all the forest-trees,  
Yet those bring forth sweet fruits, and pois'nous berries  
these."

TRENCH.

IN my first visit to the Potteries, I was accompanied by the City Missionary, who introduced me to some fourteen or sixteen females residing there.

I was, as usual, at once impressed with the great deficiency of home comforts; and the miserable countenances of many of the children told, more forcibly than words could have done, of neglect and bad management.

I told them I had just come to reside near them, and I hoped we should be good neighbours. Like them, I was so occupied with my home-duties that I feared I should not be able to visit them frequently; but it had occurred to me that if they could spare an hour one evening in the week, I would try to

do so also, and we would spend it together in conversing over our various duties and difficulties, more especially those relating to our children, and by this means I hoped we might benefit each other, as well as become better acquainted.

This invitation was by no means warmly responded to at first, but it was the first step taken towards the formation of the Kensington Potteries Mothers' Society.

One morning, a very decent elderly woman, whom I had seen at the Mothers' Meetings, asked me to call upon her husband, who had not been able to leave his house for some weeks, and was too ill to read. In the afternoon I went to the Potteries. Fortunately, I met a boy of my acquaintance in the street, and he conducted me to the dwelling, which, with the direction given to me that "it was in no street in particular," would have proved difficult to find. I had to pass through a kind of shed to reach the room in which this old couple lived. It was filled with feeding-troughs, tubs, old hoops and wheelbarrows. I managed to steer safely through all this, and ascended two or three steps into the one chamber which served at once for bedroom,



kitchen and living-room. The man was sitting in a comfortable arm-chair, by a neat little fire, and the room was very clean. His hair was perfectly white, and scantily covered one of the finest-formed heads I have ever seen. The features of his face were of a very uncommon order, and every thing marked him as one of nature's "men of power." He scarcely noticed me when I entered; but his wife said, "This is the lady, John, as has the meeting." He said, "Oh!" and gave me a kind of nod. The woman seemed annoyed at his want of cordiality, and said, again, "John, I have told you about the lady often, and I went myself this morning to ask her to come and see you."

"I know," was the laconic answer.

I saw the first advances must come from me: so I took a seat by him, and said, "I am sorry to hear you have been suffering from illness so long."

"I am seventy-five years old. I have hardly had any illness all my life. I have done a deal of work, and God has been very good to me, and I am not going to grumble at him now for shutting me up a few months."

"Your wife tells me you cannot read much,

on account of your eyes. I suppose you find the time a little tedious, after the active life you have led?"

"I shouldn't find the time tedious at all, if we were only left to ourselves." I looked to the wife for an explanation; and she said, "He means, ma'am, that the neighbours here-about annoy him so by their ways of going on."

This touched a theme upon which he could be eloquent. He began to tell me a great deal about the wickedness of his neighbours. Their desecration of the Sabbath seemed to vex him exceedingly. He complained that he could get no peace on the Sunday for the cries of those who went about selling things; while the swarms of children that came out to spend their halfpence that day showed how wicked their parents must be. As I generally avoid talking of the faults of other persons when visiting the poor, I said (wishing to change the subject), "Well, we have so much to do with ourselves that we must not judge our neighbours harshly."

The old man looked indignantly at me, and exclaimed, "Do you think if God was to call me away this instant, and I had to go to be

judged before his throne, and he was to tell me of all the wicked ways I have seen going on before my eyes, and he was to say to me, 'Why did you see all that sin, and not reprove it?' do you think he'd take for excuse my saying 'that I oughtn't to judge my neighbours harshly'? No: depend upon it, he'd hold me guilty for it. He'd say, 'You know'd better, and you ought to have cared for their souls, and told 'em of it.' I have always been in the habit of reproving sin when I have seen it, and I always shall."

The character of Nehemiah came so forcibly into my mind while he was speaking, that when he had ended I could not help remarking, "If you had lived in the days of Nehemiah, I suppose you would not have disapproved of what he did? You know, he not only reprov'd the people, but he smote certain of them, and plucked out their hair."

"Ah!" said the old man, "he was in the right of it. Whenever I reads that, I always says, 'Sarved 'em right.' We want Nehemiahs bad enough now-a-days,—people, I mean, as has got the courage to call things by their right names."

"But," I replied, "we have a later example

than Nehemiah to go by, and a more perfect one. Jesus did not reprove sin in this way.— ‘He made a whip of small cords, and drove them all out of the temple.’”

“I know,” said the old man.

“So he did once,” I said; “but a whip of small cords in the hands of Jesus is a very different thing from what it would be in our hands.”

“I don't understand you,” was the rejoinder.

I explained, “Jesus would only use it where and when it ought to be used, because he would know the extent of the evil in every heart he had to do with; but we, who can judge only after the outward appearance, might make mistakes, and inflict a wound where we ought rather to have bound one up.”

He was silent a minute, and then, as if unable to keep in any longer what had evidently been in his thoughts throughout, he said, “Ma'am, I've often heard from my old 'oo-man, and the rest of 'em, what you say to 'em at the meetings; and it has been upon my mind, when I did see you, to tell you I think if you know'd more about some of 'em you get there, you would be rather more sharp upon 'em than you are.”

"You mean, I suppose, that when I know of any thing particular wrong in any of them, I ought to reprove them?"

"Why, yes. You see, they look up to you a good deal; and it seems to me you might do a power of good this way."

"I think you do not take quite the right view of my position. I do not profess to come among them as a reprover of sin and just to preach to them about their duties. I really have no right to take such an office on myself. I want to help them, knowing that many of their mistakes arise from ignorance. Most of them come in after a hard day's work, and much suffering in body and mind from fatigue and anxiety; and, while I know much of that fatigue and anxiety might have been prevented if they had set about things in a right way instead of a wrong one, I feel the best use I can make of the little time we have together is to try to show them 'a better way.' We always begin with reading God's holy word, and that is the best reprover of sin; for Paul says, you know, 'I had not known sin, except by the law.' It was the *law* that made sin appear to him 'exceeding sinful;' and that is the effect I hope and pray it may have upon us."

"Well," said the old man, "some of 'em is a deal better for going, I must confess; but it 'pears to me you say things to them as if they were all alike,—whereas some of them is a deal wickeder than others."

I saw it would be quite impossible to separate in the mind of this veteran the offices of a teacher of righteousness and a reprover of sin, or to make him comprehend how many enemies I should make and what confusion there would be if I adopted the course which he recommended. So I just remarked, "Well, you know I always ask God to give me a wise and an understanding heart before I go among them; and I hope I shall be guided to do what is right. If I could see into the heart as God can, I might be able to adapt myself to individual cases; but, as it is, I think it would be a worse mistake to distress and vex, by unjust comments, those already sufficiently weary and heavy-laden. Encouragement in a right course will often do much more than finding fault with what is wrong. I believe that whatever good has been done has arisen from the reading together of God's word. Whether comfort, counsel, or reproof has been wanted, they have come in this way, and the promise

has been fulfilled, 'My word shall not return unto me void.'

"Ah!" said he, "that blessed book! I have lived in this place through a dark time, and I am sure I can say that it has been 'a light to my feet and a lamp to my path.'" Just then a sad fit of coughing came on, which seemed almost to deprive him of the power of breathing. When it was over, I said, "Do you often cough like that?" "I often do in the night," he replied. "I can never quite lie down; for, if the cough were to come on suddenly, I might be choked before I could be got up. The doctor says I shall go off in one of these fits some night."

I asked the wife if any one was with them at night: she said, "Oh, no: John isn't never afraid." "The last thing that I and my old 'ooman does at night," added John, "is to kneel down and commend ourselves to God's keeping. I said to her last night, after we had been praying, 'Jane, if I am sent for to-night, I am ready;' and what it will be to leave this poor place and go right off at once to the mansion my Saviour has provided for me!"

"Can you feel as trustful as your husband, Jane?" I asked.

"Why, ma'am, I do try to, and I am as happy to think about heaven as he is; but you see, ma'am, the thing I feel is, that we must die first, before we can go there, and death may be an awfuller thing than we think for."

"Jane," cried her husband, in a reproving tone of voice, "how often I have told you that if death is to be a great trouble, then God is going to send us great help for it. He took care of me and helped me when I was a strong man, and now that I am as feeble as a child he will be strength to me; and, Jane, I wish you would mind that it isn't any more hard to God to help us out of great troubles than out of little uns. You wouldn't believe, ma'am," he continued, "how happy I am at night, sometimes, when I am lying awake. He makes me to feel that love and trust in him that, as sure as David, I can say, 'I fear no evil.'"

Blessed old man! The little room, with its close atmosphere and many discomforts, seemed to me like the gate of heaven; and had he lived in Old Testament days, his name might have ranked with them of whom it is said, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and



were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

A few months after I had established the Mothers' Society, one of the women brought a message from her husband, expressing his great wish to see me. I promised to call in the course of the week; and the next afternoon I found my way to a little low dwelling which was pointed out to me as the residence I was seeking. It consisted of only two rooms,—one in front, where the family seemed to live during the day, while that behind served as a bedroom. Three or four children were playing on the floor; the mother was busy at her washing-tub; and near the fire sat the husband, who, I saw from his leather apron and the boot he held in his hand, was a shoemaker. The reception here was very different from the one previously described. When the wife announced me, the man rose from his seat; and, as his height exceeded six feet, his head scarcely cleared the ceiling. His fine figure, the form of his head, and the expression of his countenance, conveyed the idea that had the man been born in a different position he might

have risen to be lord-chancellor. After the usual greeting, he said (still standing),—

“Madam, I have wanted to see you for some time past, to thank you for what you have begun to do for us. You have thought of what we want done for us more than any thing, and I hope, madam, you will go on with it; and God will bless you for this work, and so shall many of us; for we often think we might do better if somebody would take the trouble to put us in the way of it.”

I told him that I was quite rewarded for any trouble which I was taking, by the pleasant friends I made. When I was living in the country, I had always been accustomed to a large number of poor friends; and since coming to town I had missed them very much. I told him of a book-society that my brother and I had established in the village near our house. Twelve men like himself (I believe four out of the twelve were shoemakers) each brought a book, and on the first day of the month each man passed on his book to the member next on the list; and thus all had the benefit of reading twelve books at the cost of one. We had quarterly meetings with these men, to converse about the books. I repeated

to him some of the observations they used to make, and I saw my listener was much amused.

"Ah!" said he, "I lived in the country, too, before I came here; but there was nothing of that sort going on there. I wish there had been! it would have kept me out of a deal of mischief. I have blessed God that ever I came to this place; for, though it is poor and dirty enough, I have met the best friends here that I ever knew."

He then gave me a long and interesting account of his previous life,—how he had early imbibed infidel principles from some of his companions, and had gone on for years rather wishing them to be true than actually believing them to be so.

"I couldn't bear," he said, "to think there was a God, or another life to come after this: it made me so miserable. I was obliged to try and get rid of the thoughts as fast as they came. And then there was the people as called themselves religious: I really couldn't see that they were better than those as didn't say any thing about it. They liked eating and drinking and pleasuring just as much, in their way, as any one else; and though we often heard that they talked about us in a way that showed

they despised us and thought themselves a deal better, that only made us feel worse. But, since we have been here, some of the ladies as bring round the tracts has stopped and talked to us sometimes in quite a different sort of way, you know, ma'am. One of them left me a tract to read, some time ago. I couldn't get this tract out of my mind after I had read it. There, whilst I was at work, it was lying on my bench, and I kept looking into it again and again. One day, while I was puzzling about it, the missionary came in. I soon saw he wasn't like them religious people I knew before, and I told him all that was in my mind: and 'twas the best day of my life when I met with him; for he has helped me to see things very different; and I bless God that ever he came here, and so does many others beside me."

"Well," I said, "you can say you are a happier man now than ever you were before, can you not?"

"Yes, ma'am: thank God, I can trust him for this life, and, through my blessed Saviour, I have hope of a better life to come."

I saw, by the thoughtful and earnest expression of his face, that the man had still

something on his mind: so I did not reply, but waited a minute.

"Do you know, ma'am," he continued, "though God has been so good to me, and has made me to see how he can and will save me, sinner though I am, it do trouble me, and I can't help it, to see so much confusion, like, in this world? Some people as isn't worse than others, nor yet so bad, seems to be always a-suffering; and little children, too, it do grieve me to see them suffer; and then you see, ma'am, what a place this very 'Potteries' is, to be in God's world."

"But," I replied, "God did not make the Potteries what they are. Some sixty years ago, before any one lived here, the air was fresh and sweet, flowers and trees were growing here, and it was altogether as pleasant a place as any other portion of God's dominions."

"Well," he said, "that's true." But the shade had not passed away from his countenance.

"Do you know," I continued, "it is one of the greatest troubles of my life that I so often feel just what you describe? It was only a short time ago, I was walking out, and as I turned into one of the back streets I saw a

little boy sitting on a door-step, with a baby in his arms about five or six months old; as I passed by, the baby began to cry, and the miserable expression of its little face and the hopeless look of its nurse, feeling so powerless to do any thing to comfort it,—both little faces looking already old from hunger, cold and neglect,—so troubled me that I could scarcely look at or enjoy any thing while I was out. In the evening, after my own healthy, happy children were gone to bed, I was sitting in my comfortable room, by the cheerful fire, surrounded by every thing to make life comfortable and desirable; but, instead of feeling thankful for so many mercies, I sat and cried at the recollection of those unhappy little children."

"And did ye, sure, ma'am?" said the man. "Law! now, how we do feel alike, after all, when we come to know! But I suppose, ma'am, that sort of thing does not last long with you?"

"I remember, that evening at family prayer," I continued, "the chapter which was read had this verse in it:—'Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish:

I thought it was not my will either; but there was this great difference,—whatever God *willed*, he had the *power* to do; that he had sent his Son to die for the world, and these little creatures were part of his world, and he would do with them just what is right."

"Do you think, ma'am," said the man, "that God is altogether angry with us for this sort of feeling? He must know that it is very difficult for us to see so much misery and not be troubled about it."

"I do not think that is quite so clear," I said, "as that he is pleased with us for trusting him entirely. I think he has great sympathy with us in the difficulty we have to contend with in this respect. He says, 'And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.' Though he did not blame Thomas for his unbelief, he said, 'Blessed are they who have not seen me, and yet have believed.' Even a grain of faith is commended, and is spoken of as having much reward connected with it; and the apostle tells us, 'Cast not away, therefore, your confidence, which hath *great recompense of reward.*'"

"Well, ma'am," he replied, "I do pray for

faith. I do think it is a glorious thing to be able to trust every thing with God. I says to myself, often, 'There! wait a bit, and you'll know.'

I answered, "I once heard my dear mother talking to a person who troubled himself very much about the management of God's world. She said, 'I have often compared our present condition to that of servants who might be called into a great house to assist in performing some important work; but, instead of the same servants being employed throughout, each was expected to work only one hour, and then to give place to others. Of course, from this circumstance, no one of them would be able to understand the object and design of the work: these would only be known to the master. All that he required of them was to do his bidding a little while, and then to receive a great reward. How foolish it would be in those servants to go fretfully through their short period of service, and dishonour their master by evil reports of what they could not understand, and lose their reward at last!'"

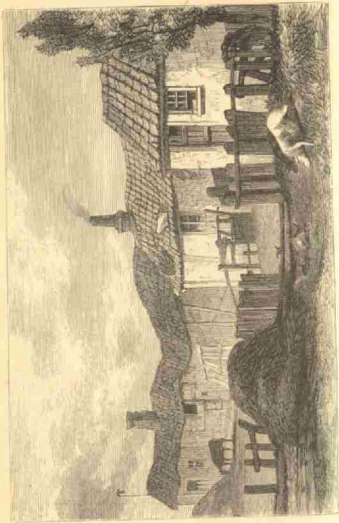
"Oh, ma'am," said the man, "that is beautiful! it was never so plain to me before."



Just then the children, who had been sent out by their mother to play, that they might not interrupt our conversation, returned; and, after making a little acquaintance with them, I took my leave. As I returned home, I hoped that this pleasant interview might be the beginning of a long friendship; but I never saw my friend again. Only about a week from that time he was taken ill, and died a few days afterwards. I did not hear of his sickness in time to see him; but I heard that he died in peace, trusting wholly in the Saviour. How soon was the mystery, with him, exchanged for perfect knowledge! How soon was he admitted where every tear shed, either for himself or others, was forever wiped away; while we, who tried even out of our own dimness and sorrow to enlighten and comfort him, are still left to wonder and weep!

John Foster, after the death of his wife, when writing to a friend, says, referring to the years that may elapse before he may be permitted to join her, "Does that to her appear a long time in prospect, or has she begun to account of duration according to the great laws of eternity? Earnest imaginings and

Wagner's Ramble.



TUCKER'S COVTAUGH.

(The oldest house in Kensington, Victoria.)

questionings like these arise without end, and still there is no answer, no revelation. The mind comes again and again closer up to the thick black veil; but there is no perforation,—no glimpse. She that loved me (and, I trust, loves me still) will not, must not, cannot answer me. I can only imagine her to say, 'Come and see. Serve our God, so that you shall come and share at no distant time.' And again, in another letter, he says, "How striking to think that *she*, so long and so recently with me here, so beloved, but now so totally withdrawn and absent, that she experimentally knows all that I am in vain inquiring!"

The cottage of the communicative little old woman to whom I am indebted for so much of my information was among the earliest erected in the Potteries. It must have been a picturesque object when the smoke first curled from the low chimney across the verdant plain, where neither villa, terrace nor steeples were to be seen.

"Tucker's Cottage" may be seen in the sketch which an artist has furnished from his sketch-book. This interesting dwelling consisted of one floor, divided into two apart-

ments, one for the family, the other for domestic purposes, and such animals as were thought indispensable to the general welfare. Before and behind was an ample plot of ground, enclosed by a thick mound of earth, that resembled the outworks of a fortification. The ground front was the domain of poultry, pigs and the donkey; in the rear stagnated a lake, into which flowed the foul streams of the province. The pond was overhung with willow stumps, that assumed the title of trees. Like a sea far more famous, it had no "outlet but the ambient air." As years passed, and the events previously described took place, this primeval cottage was fast advancing to decay. The roof and walls had been often repaired with old pieces of board, condemned tea-trays, plaster, and similar rubbish; the windows had become opaque, and the chimney transparent. Various means had been adopted to prevent the downfall of the whole house. After a "stiffer breeze" than common, the little old man might have been seen doctoring Jenny's (the donkey's) apartment, and his own also. But all his trouble and pains were unavailing. The little dwelling, which he and his "guidwife" had helped to rear with their

own hands (laughed at by the world, but endeared to them by the associations of a lifetime), was to be taken down; and thus, just five years before the expiration of their lease, the venerable pair were compelled, at a cost to themselves of thirty shillings (which they could very ill afford), to pull down what remained of the old fabric. "Some natural tears they shed, but wiped them soon." Yes, literally, they "wiped them soon;" for the poor old couple belonged to the company of the faithful, who believe that "here they have no continuing city, but seek one to come." It was "the Lord's will," they said. "He ordered all for the best." "The Master would soon call them to a house not made with hands;" and so, without repining, they rented an adjoining cottage. Here the principal inconvenience was that "grannie," in her old age, had scarcely room to stretch her weary limbs: so narrow was the new domicile that the chain of the faithful dog had to be shortened, against his wishes, and the poor ducks and hens, accustomed to a more ample domain, could scarcely find a roosting-place.

There is yet another member of this little family who must not be forgotten. A deaf

and blind sister has long received shelter in this humble home, where no charitable aid has entered, or parochial relief intrudes. Though feeling is the only avenue of access to this afflicted one, she shares their family devotions. The Bible is brought to her, and she passes her hands over it, and then places them in the attitude of prayer, in which she always keeps them for a certain time. After they removed to their present habitation, this poor creature was much perplexed at the loss of the old familiar turns and corners by which she had been accustomed to feel her way about. The only way in which they could comfort her was to bring to her the word that "endureth forever," pass her hands over it, and lift them up to heaven.

It is not unusual to find persons of determined character holding peculiar sentiments, and very dogmatical in the expression of them. With significant nods and wise shakes of the head, you may frequently hear this worthy couple saying that "man can do nothing towards converting himself,—no, nothing. You may as well tell me to mount up to the sky, as that man can think one good thought of himself, or do one right action."

The old woman entertains a very high respect for the excellent curate we have before mentioned. Once, on detecting herself speaking more highly of him and of his work than was consistent with her principles of the "creature being nothing," she qualified her praise by saying, "He was able to do all this, because the Lord's time was come: he wouldn't have done nothing without that, d'ye see, ma'am."

I spoke to her once about some plans of my own, by which I hoped to effect some improvement. "Well, ma'am," she said, "if the Lord's time is come for it, you'll do it; and if it isn't, you won't. He'll stop you up, or let you go on, just as he sees fit. I don't trouble so much as some people do about trying to alter things and make 'em better; for I know the Lord have planned it all out, and he'll do it just as he likes."

Although they have the greatest respect for the whole of God's word, yet some portions of it are much more frequently quoted and dwelt upon than others. "No man can come to me except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him," seems to have made a greater impression than "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

Divine grace sanctifies the natural disposition, but it does not entirely alter it; and we can often trace an intimate connection between character and creed. The opposition which these good people had experienced had tended to strengthen a severity natural to them. How different were these impressions of truth from those of the kind-hearted man previously described, who "would have all men to be saved," and could scarcely bring his mind to acquiesce in any wish short of that! There are few Christians to be met with who are not more deeply impressed with one form or phase of truth than another. Nor is this to be regretted, if we can only meet on the common ground of "love to Him who has died for us." In the words of one of the most popular preachers of the present day, "Supposing the Spirit of truth to descend upon the earth, would he anywhere find a temple erected to himself, of which he could take possession and say, 'This is mine,' to the exclusion of all others? No; but he would go from one building to another, and see here a *stone* that he could claim as his own, and there another, and we should hear him saying, 'The materials for my temple are now scattered, though



most of them are to be found even here; but the day is coming when I will collect them together, and *My temple shall stand upon the earth.*' "

In the sketches of character thus presented, there is no intention of conveying the idea that the inhabitants of the Potteries generally answer to this description. The object has been to show that, in the midst of every disadvantage, and surrounded by all incentives to evil, God has had his own people and has given them grace to hold out to the end.

To such as have accustomed themselves to look down upon this place as a plague-spot,—a pest that we should be well rid of,—this narrative will show that there is good material to be picked out of the rubbish, and that even the rubbish itself may be capable of conversion into good material. In talking to policemen, I have more than once heard them say, "We hardly ever take up any of the Pottery people for theft: they are known among us to be honest and industrious. We have very little to do with the Pottery people; and if it were not for the DRINK, we should have *nothing* to do with them."

## CHAPTER III.

## SLOW ADVANCING.

"You talk about sending black-coats among the Indians. Now, we have no such poor children among us; we have no such drunkards, or people who abuse the Great Spirit. Indians dare not do so. They pray to the Great Spirit, and he is kind to them. Now, we think it would be better for you teachers all to stay at home, and go to work right here in your own streets, where all your good work is wanted. This is my advice. I would rather not say any more."—*Extract of Speech of the Chief of the Ojibbeway Indians.*

AH! this drink, this terrible drink, which still goes on slaying its thousands and tens of thousands! No wonder that indignation has been so aroused against it that many have banished it from their tables, and even from their houses! Our poor Potteries have endured a full share of the misery and destruction that ever follow it.

During the summer, the brickmaker, with the assistance of the elder members of his

family, sometimes earns between ten and fifteen dollars per week. One man informed me that he and his family had earned fourteen dollars and fifty cents nearly every week through the season; and yet that man's wife and three children were shivering at my door one bitterly cold morning in December, and begging for food and clothing. The effects of the hard work and hard drinking had been to bring on a terrible illness, and not a sixpence was left of all the money which they had earned "when the sun was shining." After enduring privation and suffering too terrible to contemplate, the man and one of the children died, and the poor widow, with the remaining children, went to the poor-house.

Were it not for this inveterate habit of drinking, few places would be more independent of help from without than the Potteries; but long habits of intemperance have so impoverished the people that few can now afford to *buy* the pigs for themselves; they therefore fatten them "upon commission," and in this way can gain only a miserable livelihood. Considerable sums of money, however, may still be earned by those who are careful and

prudent, both by pig-feeding and brick-making. The latter work is not constant, but can be procured only at one particular time of the year. Hence, in the course of the same year may be seen, in the same family, the extreme of prodigality and destitution. The effect of increased wages, generally, is that more money goes to the public-house, and the future is still unprovided for. I have often told these labourers that their memories seemed much shorter than the memory of bees, birds, or ants. These little creatures never forget that winter will return, and make the most ample provision for it. But any stranger would think that the present was the first winter which these human beings had ever known,—that it had come upon them unexpectedly and found them unprepared for it.

The only means by which many of them get food for the winter is by pawning the little furniture they possess, or by "going on tick,"—in other words, by getting trusted at the shops. Those, however, who manage to pay for their things as they buy them, do it in such a manner as to be little better off than under the "tick" system. The child is sometimes sent to the shop three times a day, to

obtain the supplies for each meal as it is wanted. Of course, the shopkeeper cannot give so much time, paper and string, without being paid for them. After a careful calculation, I feel convinced that, whether the poor man's wants are supplied through the "tick system" or the "hand-to-mouth" system, in either case he gets the value of only three dollars and a half for his five dollars. This proves the justice of the saying that poverty perpetuates itself.

The winter of 1856-57 was one of unusual distress. Less casual work than usual turned up in the neighbourhood; and had it not been that several of the women found employment in jobs and as laundresses, many would have had no resource but the poor-house.

When the mother has to go out to work that she may obtain the necessary food for herself and children, the effects to the family are often most disastrous. On her return, wearied out in earning her hard-won dollar, or less, she finds that the baby has been crying for hours (as well it might, poor thing!); that another child has been scalded by hot water from the kettle; that another, perhaps, has wandered away and has not come home, and

that she herself must go and seek for it; while the "little girl" left in charge of the whole is severely scolded, if not beaten, for her many short-comings.\* In the midst of all these annoyances, the father returns for the hundredth time, without having found work, exhausted and foot-sore in his fruitless search; and, sorer still in spirit, as he feels that he is not wanted in the world, that the labour-market has no demand for him, he enters the wretched hovel which he is obliged to call "home." He hears the crying of the children, the scolding of the mother, and sees everywhere the destruction which children left to themselves will cause. The wife throws her dollar at him as he enters, crying, "There! much good may that do yer! Here's a shilling's worth of things broke,—Johnny's coat is burnt, and Sally's pinafore; the children have eat up the tea out of the paper; and

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\* The grave evils to which reference is here made are remedied to a gratifying extent among us, by what are called "Foster Homes," or receptacles for little children during the day, while the mother is pursuing her calling away from home. Much more liberal aid would doubtless be given to such institutions were their design and utility properly understood.

yer'll have to pay for a sight o' doctoring afore this scalded leg is well." A man already angry would, with less aggravation than this, return railing for railing; and so the angry words are given back again with interest. Blows occasionally follow, according to the temper of the moment, sometimes inflicted on the provoking wife, sometimes on the poor victim whose negligence is supposed to have caused all these misfortunes. The cravings of hunger oblige some one at last to pick up the money, and "the girl" is despatched, with many threats, to the nearest place where bread and cheese and beer can be procured, and charged at the same time to get "two penn'orth of gin," to give to the baby to make it sleep. This expensive food consumes the greater part of the money. Three pennyworth of bread, two pennyworth of vegetables, two pennyworth of barley or rice, and four pennyworth of meat, *well cooked*, would have supplied all the family with a good nourishing supper, leaving something for the mid-day meal of the morrow; but there has been no one at home to cook, and, in their excited and miserable state, it is not food they care for, so much as something that will dim the perception of their

extreme wretchedness,—any thing that will make them sleep and forget. So they drink the beer, and the baby has the gin, and, in spite of the moan of the scalded child, they sleep,—but in such an atmosphere, surrounded with such dirt within and stench without, that, should they all awake with burning fever the next morning, no one can wonder. They tell me that on the mornings after such nights they suffer from intense depression, so much so that whatever remains of the dollar is spent in drink, in order to drag themselves up to a repetition of their daily toil.

Now, the earnings of the family just described (for I have drawn a picture from real life) averaged, for five months in the summer, twelve dollars and a half per week. They could, of course, have lived very well upon half the sum. If we reckon two dollars and a half for paying off old scores, buying new clothes, furniture and sundries, there would still be three dollars and seventy-five cents left, which might have been put into the savings-bank to meet the demands of the ensuing winter. But, instead of doing this, the man, in his distress, confessed to me that the cost of what he and his wife drank each week of their



prosperity would amount to at least five dollars. The usual quantity of beer that a brickmaker takes during the hours of work is seven pints. This expenditure is looked upon simply as necessary; and when money is plentiful there must be the drinking for luxury as well as necessity.

The only excuse which is made for this recklessness is that the toil of the brickmaker is excessive. In the summer he is expected to work from four or five o'clock in the morning till eight o'clock in the evening. This pressure of work necessitates the drying of sand on Sunday for the next week's work. The Sabbath is no day of rest to him. He is expected even on that day, and during his short night, to be watchful over the bricks, and cover them up on the approach of rain. Should he oversleep himself (which is at least possible, after such a day's work), or be away at a place of worship on a Sunday, and the bricks in the mean time be injured by wet, he would lose some part of his wages, of which a portion is always kept back by the master.

I had a conversation, recently, with a man who has for the last seven or eight years acted as a kind of leader-in a brickyard. During all this time he has been a "teetotaller;" and,

though his work has been as hard as that of any man in the yard, and sometimes even harder, he is in perfectly good health, and, what is still more unusual, retains the full possession of his intellectual faculties. I say, unusual; for in most cases, when this hard work is accompanied with hard drinking, the brickmaker does actually very nearly realize the old woman's complimentary description of, "He has no more sense than the clay he works on." His life thus literally resembles that of the brute: every bone, muscle and sinew is exerted to its utmost extent. The only change from work is eating, drinking and sleeping; and when this has gone on for several years, all intellectual power seems extinct.

The man to whom I have just referred has for some years past rented a house near the Potteries, for which he pays one dollar and seventy-five cents per week. The eldest girl, now fourteen years old, has been in a place for the last four years, and is so fond of it (the father tells me) that, when she comes home for a holiday, nothing can induce her to stay a minute beyond the time appointed for her return.

"I got a holiday," said he, "last autumn,

and I took my wife and children to the Crystal Palace. We had a beautiful day there, and seed enough in that little time to give us something to talk about ever since. The only trouble we had was, my girl was in a kind of a fidget, for fear she shouldn't get back to her place in time."

I asked this man a great many questions about his mode of life. He said,—

"Our trade would do very well, if it wasn't for the number of hours we have to work, and if we could get our Sundays to ourselves. There is just now a strike among the men; they want to get twelve and a half cents a thousand more upon the bricks than they at present receive; and, as I know how to reckon very well, I know that the masters could give us that and still get a handsome profit for themselves. If we could get that, then we should only work from six to six; and we shouldn't, in that case, have to dry our sand on Sundays: we could then get all that we wanted ready on Saturday evening. I don't hold with these strikes, ma'am: they are not the right sort of thing. It isn't much use, either, for men to stand out against their masters; for until they have learnt to save

money, they can't hold out no time, hardly, without hurting themselves dreadful. The day the men turned out, a gentleman was riding by, and he stopped and asked me what it was all about; and so I told him. He says to me, 'Do you take any part in it?' And I says, 'No, sir: I don't feel comfortable about it, at all; but, sir, for all that I don't like this way of doing it, I don't think the men are asking for more than they should: they only want the masters to be as considerate of them as they are of their horses.' 'What do you mean?' the gentleman says. 'Why, sir, I mean this, that the horse employed in our brickyard is brought in at six o'clock in the morning, he has a proper time for rest in the day, and he is always taken off again at six in the evening; but the men must work fifteen and sixteen hours to get a living out of it; and this hurts their bodies and souls too, sir; for it isn't many men can think much as works like that. I am a stronger man than most, sir, and I save myself a deal by not drinking; but it hurts me, I find, and, as soon as I can get a little money in hand, I shall try and get out of it, and take to selling coals, or something of that kind.' You know,

ma'am," the man continued, "I think over all these things a deal, and I do wish masters would listen to what we have got to say; for though we a'n't so wise, like, as they are, we think we could make some things plainer to them. When this was first talked of among the men, I did wish master would let me talk to him about it. I think, if he would have heard how we 'splained all, things wouldn't have been as they are now. It seems to me that God have planned out this world for us all to depend upon one another, and we ought never to stand to one another, as we do now. You know, ma'am, when we working-men look at all these fine houses and gardens about, and see all the fine furniture that goes into them, we know that it is all done by our labour, and that the great people couldn't do without us, any more than we could do without them. And it do seem to me the world would be a deal happier, and better, too, than it is, if we felt that sort of thing to one another,—felt, I mean, that we were all wanted, like, to make the world go on right."

I told him I thought many masters of the present day felt just what he said, and honoured and valued their work-people, and

wished very much that they should have proper time for improving themselves and making their own homes comfortable: "but," I said, "you know as well as I do that when men *get* this time they do not always make a right use of it."

"Ah! that's how it is, you see, ma'am; and I am always a-telling 'em how they do stand in their own way and hurt themselves. Though we can't have every thing we want to get, there is a good many of 'em needn't be half so bad off as they are; but you see, ma'am, there is a great deal of bad management at home, sometimes, and that always keeps a man down. I have looked after this thing so long that I can pretty well tell whether a man has got a good home or not, afore I ask him. He always holds up his head, and doesn't seem afraid of anybody; and, if things do go cross with him, he does not get reckless, like, about it, and he takes the world kinder, like, than other people. I am so thankful to have this nice place to myself here, and to be able to send my children to school, and see 'em growing up the right way, that I never envies nobody. If the Squire were to offer me his carriage and to

change places with him, I wouldn't; for I know I'm happy now, and I mightn't be then."

I asked him what he supposed to be the cause why so many working-men had such wretched homes.

"Why, ma'am," he answered, "there is so many things, I hardly know what to say. The drink seems the chief thing; but there is many a man that wouldn't drink, if he could bear himself without it. There are so many women who don't seem to know how to manage no more than nothing; and when *they* take to drinking, and going to the pawn-shop, then there is nothing but misery for them all. There's many a woman in our place who has only one decent gown, and that is 'most always in the pawn-shop; she just gets it out of a Saturday night, when the money comes in, and by Monday, sometimes, the money is a'most gone, and she puts it in again. Some of our poor fellows have got but one shirt; and I have known a man give it to his wife on Monday morning to wash, and she has taken it off to the pawn-shop, and got some drink with the money she got. Sometimes, when the wife does try to go on right, the

man don't: he takes to all the bad ways, and leads her a dog's life: it is only when they both pull one way that it all goes right."

After the distress of the winter to which I have before referred, I thought it a good time to endeavour to make some impression upon them as to the urgent necessity of making provision for the future, so that there might not be a constant repetition of such terrible calamities. I therefore addressed the following letter to them, and sent a copy to each man in the Potteries:—

"TO THE WORKING-MEN  
OF THE  
KENSINGTON POTTERIES.

"MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

"I have seen, with much concern and sorrow, during the past winter, how greatly most of you have suffered. Work has been unusually scarce and difficult to obtain, and you have found it almost impossible to maintain your families in any degree of comfort. Perhaps you have been tempted sometimes to look with envy on your richer neighbours, and



have thought that they cared nothing for all your sorrow and suffering; but, indeed, many of them have cared a great deal about it, and have talked over it, and have tried to think of some means to prevent this sad state of things from happening so often.

“Some of you think, I dare say, that rich people should help you, by giving you more of their money; and so they should, perhaps, in times of sickness and calamity: but I have watched these things now for many years, and I have not observed that those do best who have most given to them; but the prosperous people are generally those who resolutely set about to help themselves.

“Now, we have been thinking over various ways by which you could do this better than you have hitherto done; and one thing that has occurred to us is, that as many of you earn more money in the summer than you actually need to spend, it would be a good plan to put by some of it for your use during the winter. We all find it very difficult to take care of our money ourselves, and most of us have recourse to some bank or other to take care of it for us. It is much to be regretted that there is no savings-bank in this neighbourhood nearer

than Kensington; and it would take up too much of your time to carry your money there often. The excellent Penny Savings-Bank, established at the Notting Dale School-Room, is most valuable, but it at present confines itself to rather small sums of money; and some of you—young men especially, who have not yet begun the expense of housekeeping—could, with good management, save a considerable sum of money every week. If young men only knew what future misery, degradation and sorrow they would save themselves by being determined not to involve themselves in the expense of a family until they had at least two hundred and fifty dollars in the savings-bank, I am sure they would try hard for it.

“It would give me much pleasure to do something to help you over this difficulty; and, if you do not object to trust me with your money, I propose being at the Infant School-Room, Princes’ Place, every Saturday evening, from eight till nine o’clock, to receive from you any sum you may have to spare from your weekly earnings. You would have a little book in which to keep your own account, which you could at any time compare

with mine. One of your kind friends in this neighbourhood, Mr. —, has kindly consented to take care of the money. By giving a week's notice, you can have out what you put in, at any time you like.

“I think I can tell you of one way that would enable you to save a good deal of money. There are thousands of workmen in this country who are doing some of the hardest work that is ever done, such as working at iron-foundries, &c., and who do it all without the aid of intoxicating drink. With the money thus saved, they are able to get better food, better clothing and more comfortable homes, and, consequently, are better, stronger and happier. I wish very much that you would give this a trial. At the end of the week you can reckon how much you usually spend upon drink, and can bring that sum to me. I am sure you would feel the benefit of it in the winter. I have the pleasure of meeting some of your wives every week, and then we talk a great deal about the best means of making your homes comfortable; but the wife cannot do it all alone: it is her chief place to learn to lay out the money to the best possible advantage; it is your's to earn it; and it is when both

husband and wife act wisely and well that the family is usually prosperous and happy.

"But above all these things I have mentioned, I want you to be in earnest in seeking to obtain God's blessing upon all you do. 'Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Perhaps you think you should like to have the good things promised without the trouble of seeking God; but those who have tried, those who have really sought God and found him, tell us that this is the best part of it, and that they would rather give up every earthly possession than live again without God in the world.

"You know, when Jesus came from heaven, he did not settle himself in a grand house, and have a number of people to wait upon him; but he, as the reputed son of a carpenter, worked as you do for the supply of his own wants, and spent a great deal of time, besides, in helping those who wanted help. However poor or neglected you may be, you cannot be more so than Jesus was. I do not know of any thing so likely to cheer you in your daily toil as to remember that God cares for you,—that he is watching you, and inviting you to

come to him, weary and heavy-laden as you are, and he will give you rest. I wish you would come to this kind Friend every day, and ask him to make you wise to know how to manage your worldly affairs aright, and ask him to make you holy, that your worst enemy, sin, may not triumph over you. Ask him to make you fit for that 'beautiful world he has gone to prepare:' so that when you have accomplished, as a hireling, your day, and finished the work he has given you to do, you may find an entrance into that kingdom which is not meat and drink, 'but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.'

"I hope to meet many of you at the Infant School-Room, Princes' Place, on Saturday, the 1st of May. I intend to be there about a quarter before eight o'clock; and if I can help you in this or in any other way, it will give me much pleasure.

"I am

"Your sincere friend,

" ————."

It did not surprise me at all that for some weeks this letter seemed to be taken no notice of. I went regularly to the place appointed,

but no one came. Among other reasons, no doubt, the calamities of the past winter had involved in debt nearly all those to whom I had written, and the money for the first few months after they had obtained work went to pay off old scores. But the principal obstacle was, that where people have been so little accustomed to think and reason, any new proposition would, in the first place, take some time to be comprehended; and then, as the safety of their money was involved in the plan, it would require to be received with great caution. When a month had passed, a few began to bring me small sums. I had no large depositors during the summer, had the whole of my receipts did not amount to more than one hundred and twenty-five dollars. This, however, was a beginning; and, as the men received their money back again in the winter, several of them remarked that it was "all as if it was given them: the bits of money would all have been gone, if they had not been saved up in this way."

I found that a few of them had previously made some attempts at saving money, and were much disappointed at the result. One woman told me she had once with great dif-

faculty managed to save up thirty-five dollars; and one day, when she was absent, her little room was broken into and all the money stolen. They said they were too far off either from Kensington or Paddington Savings-Bank to deposit their money there; and "as to keeping it in their own places, that was impossible: *it never kept there.*"

A ragged boy, about thirteen years of age, came to the school-room one evening, bringing a penny which he asked me to keep for him, and said, if I would come for it, he would bring a penny there every evening. I told him I had not time to do that; but if he would take care of it through the week, I should be glad to receive seven pennies from him every Monday evening. He said he couldn't do that; for if he had it in his pocket he should play "pitch-and-toss" with it. I told him if he would bring it in the dinner-hour, the Infant-School teacher would be so kind as to take care of it for him till the night came for paying it in. This he agreed to do. I asked him how it was he had just the penny every day to save. He said he was earning nine pennies a day then, and that he told his mother he earned only eight pennies, and so saved a

penny for himself. I said, "You shouldn't do it in that way. I dare say, if you told your mother you wanted to save a penny a day, she would not object to it."

"Tell my mother, indeed!" said the boy. "Oh, yes! and take her a stick at the same time to beat me with; and then it would be the sooner over."

He then asked me what I meant to do with all the money he brought me, or rather meant to bring me.

"I shall put it in my desk, and take care of it till you want it."

"But supposing, now, I should die, what would you do with it then?"

"Well, I have not thought of that. I hope you will live and make a good use of the money."

"But suppose I don't?"

"Well, when you have saved two or three shillings, you can make your will, if you like, and leave it to somebody."

"But I can't write; and I've heard as how wills is 'allus writed.'"

"Then you had better come to the Ragged School, as soon as it is opened, and learn."

"Well, I think I will. I have heard it



takes a sight o' money to bury anybody. If I should die afore I can write, you can spend the money for that."

"Very well; but I hope you will live and learn to read and write, and grow up to be a useful and good man."

"And do yer, now?" said he, walking off with one of those inimitable whistles peculiar to such boys.

## CHAPTER IV.

## SOWING SEED.

"Some say man has no hurts, some seek them to reveal,  
And to exasperate some, and some to hide and heal."

TRENCH.

A LITTLE before Christmas I received an intimation through the women whom I used to meet, that their husbands would be glad to talk with me, if I would give them an opportunity for that purpose. I fixed an evening, and sixteen men came.

They told me they had been thinking a great deal about the bad management of their affairs generally, and especially about their habit of buying every thing at a great disadvantage,—that they wished very much they could see their way to do better. One man had a copy of the rules of a loan-society which had worked very well in other places, and might be a great help to them. They would require assistance from some of the

gentlemen of the neighbourhood to help them to start it. This they asked me to obtain for them, and also the use of the school-room where they might make their payments; since, if they had to go to a public-house for this purpose, they might as well abandon all thought of saving.

Two or three of the men told me they wanted, in some quiet way, to learn to read and write better; for though, when they were asked, they said they could do both, yet they could do neither well enough for the occupation to be pleasant to them. I knew what they meant by the "quiet way." Men have a great dislike to learning as children, or with children. I told them, as to the writing, the best thing they could do would be to save a few sixpences and buy some copy-books. Any man might teach himself to write well from them, with no other assistance than just being told how to hold his pen. Good reading, too, they might acquire by constant practice and listening to others who could read better than they.

This last observation opened the way for me to introduce another subject. I told them that, before we separated, I wished to read a

chapter in the Bible. Though we differed in many other respects, we were all alike in this, that each needed God's teaching; and if we expected any of our plans for improving our condition in life to be successful, we must ask God's guidance in making the plans, and his blessing in carrying them out. One of the men immediately got up and brought me a Bible, adding, "Now we shall be all right." This man was a great professor of religion, but I knew, alas! not always a consistent one; and I saw the scornful curl of the lip directed against him from some of his comrades. Out of these sixteen men a great variety of creeds might have been collected. One or two of my listeners were staunch Baptists; about the same number were Wesleyans; one, I believe, was in the habit of attending service at the Established Church; but those who had hitherto taken the leading part in the conversation were men who have always a great deal to say against "parsons,"—men who use the word "humbug" more frequently than any other in reference to any thing of a religious nature. Most of the rest belonged to a very numerous class; more numerous among working-men than is generally supposed.

I felt the difficulty of suiting such an audience, and, as I turned over the pages of the book, had to encourage myself by the thought, "Never mind: it is God's word, and not your's." I began by saying that among the many different characters who came to Jesus when he was upon earth, there was one in particular, mentioned in the third chapter of John, whose history would interest us. He differed from others in this respect, that he was not a poor man. He was a ruler among the Jews,—a master of Israel; but that did not signify much, since we need in our smaller affairs the same wisdom that he was seeking to enable him to be a better ruler.

Now, though this man wished to be wiser and better, he thought, perhaps, it would never do for the people, who looked up to him as their ruler and guide, to see him going to Jesus to be taught, just like any common man: so at last he struck upon the plan of seeing Jesus by night. In this way he hoped he should get what he wanted, without making his visit known to other people. Many teachers would have said, "Well, as you are ashamed to be *seen* coming to me, you had better not come at all." But Jesus did not think of the

affront put upon himself; he only saw before him a man whose heart was not right with God,—who was not safe for heaven. I dare say, too, that, as Jesus knew all that was passing in the mind of this ruler, he knew that he had not come to him for heavenly knowledge only. He rather, perhaps, wished to learn from Jesus some arts of government, by which he could obtain a greater influence over the people. He would have liked to know how long the Jews were to be in subjection to the Romans, and many other things of that kind. But Jesus had made this man's soul, and knew its worth; knew—as a fact—that it must live forever, and that, if he helped him now to gain or to govern the whole world, it would indeed be of some little use to him for a few prosperous years, and then would come the blackness of darkness forever. Therefore, without taking any notice of Nicodemus's compliments, whatever they may have meant, he lost not a moment in announcing to his wondering disciple the great and solemn truth, "Ye must be born again."

After explaining this to them as well as I could, together with a few of the following verses, we came to the words, "And as Moses

lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up." I turned to the chapter in Numbers giving the account of this. From the intense interest with which these men listened to this, simply as a narrative, I was led to suppose that to some of them it might be new. I told them I once saw a picture of this extraordinary story. In one corner of the picture was the pole, with the serpent lifted up on it. Strong men, women and little children were there,—some in great agony, as if just bitten, others perfectly prostrate, with the hue of death upon their faces. Mothers were standing with little children in their arms, trying to raise the head that seemed to have drooped in death, and to rouse it just for one look. But that which struck me most was the figure of a man standing before an apparently dying woman. He had something in his hand, to which he endeavoured to draw her attention; and his figure was placed exactly between her and the brazen serpent, so that without stretching her head either to the one side or the other she could not see the object from which alone she was to derive life. The artist had made it appear that, with the little dying strength which re-

mained, she was trying to move herself out of the way of this hinderance; and, as I continued to look at the picture, so strongly was I impressed that I felt myself saying, "This man *must* be got out of the way, or the woman will die."

"In thinking over this afterwards," I continued, "it occurred to me that there were many *now* acting the part of this cruel man. All teachers of error resemble him. Those lecturers whom some of you men hear occasionally, and who tell you to believe in nothing you cannot see,—that as to your being bitten with the old serpent, *sin*, it is all a fiction, although, even whilst you are listening, you can hardly be still for the agony which the bites have inflicted,—the priest, too, who comes and tells us we need not *look for ourselves*, that his looking for us, or that the intercession of the Virgin Mary, will do equally well,—that at any rate we need not trouble *ourselves*,—are like this man in the picture. Then you yourselves sometimes stand in one another's way; and when you see any eye directed aright, instead of removing all impediments, you rather, by your jesting, ridicule and banter, cause the eye to be turned away.



And what is it turned to? It just goes back to the old dreary state of 'seeking rest and finding none.' Nothing ever strikes me so much in false teaching as its cruelty. These self-constituted leaders will see you suffer without relief, knowing, too, that, bad as it is, this is only the beginning of suffering: they will still interpose themselves and their false doctrines between you and the look that would bring such healing and joy as you have never known before. It is something like this. Suppose there were but one large fountain of water in the street from which the people could get their supplies, and that this fountain were kept by one person, whose duty it is to open it to all who applied, and to allow them to help themselves as freely as they pleased; suppose, then, that, instead of aiding you to fill your pitcher, he used a great deal of ingenuity in persuading you that if you carried it to the top of Notting Hill, or over to Kensington, perhaps you would get water which would answer your purpose much better,—that the wells there had been more recently dug,—that the water there would suit your particular constitution much better: would it not be cruel in him not to allow you

to supply your wants in the most simple and direct way,—in the way intended and provided by one who really did know exactly what was adapted for you?

“Whenever your worldly interests are concerned, I do not consider you men are easily to be taken in: it is only about the salvation of your souls,—your eternal interests,—that which will be living on still when the heavens and the earth have passed away,—it is only on these points that you allow yourselves to be—to be—I must use one of your own words—to be ‘humbled.’”

“Then, again, if it were some difficult thing which God asked us to do, we might make many excuses; we might plead the want of learning, the want of capacity, the want of strength; but we have only to ‘Look and live.’”

“Ma’am,” said one of the men, “will you pray for us?”

We all kneeled together, and prayed that whatever prevented our looking to the “Crucified One” might be removed, and that, instead of going to earthly fountains to quench our thirst, we might drink of the water of everlasting life, and thirst no more.

Just as we were separating, one of the men said, "Ma'am, if you will come here to meet us every Wednesday evening, we'll all come, and bring about a hundred more with us." I replied that I was much obliged to them, but I really had not the time to spare. If my help was the only help they could get, I would make any sacrifice and come; but if they would only take the trouble to walk about half a mile, to Mr. Lewis's school-room, at Westbourne Grove, he would be very glad to see them in their working-clothes, and would explain every thing to them much better than I could.

Several of them promised to go; and, as most of them were still lingering about over the fire, I said to them, "I wish you men would try and get out of the way of talking about 'parsons' as you do. I don't mean to say that all 'parsons' are what they ought to be, by a great deal; but the way you often speak of them is as unjust as it would be for me to speak with contempt of all working-men, because some among them are drunkards and thieves."

"Ah, that's true," said one of them. "Fair play's a jewel, anyhow."

"It is not only the unfairness to them," I said, "but you put yourselves very often out of the way of receiving benefit from those who do most sincerely and earnestly wish to help you. As long as we dislike people, it is hardly possible that they can do us any good. If you are not in a hurry to go, I will tell you about a man I met with lately, who was doing himself a great deal of mischief in this way."

They said they were in no hurry,—they shouldn't do any thing more that night; they were glad to stay.

[I did not give them the story so fully as I have written it here. I had no notes with me, and simply told them from memory the part that would apply to our previous conversation.]

"For some weeks before we went into the house in which we now live, several workmen were employed there; and I generally went once in the course of the day, to see how they were getting on. One of them, a painter, was a remarkably knowing man: he seemed to have read an endless number of books, papers and every thing else. If I had been unable to look at the papers, he could always tell me any thing that was going on. He

often made remarks upon the government of the country, and sometimes these were very sensible. As he was a single man, and did not seem to care much where he spent his time, I proposed to him that (as he had to come a long distance to his work) he should take possession of a little room in the house and make himself comfortable there. He seemed very glad to do this. A day or two after he had settled himself, I had occasion to go to his room; and I found, among other things, a great quantity of books and newspapers strewed about. Some of the books were political, and there were a few novels, by no means the best. After I had finished speaking to him about his work that day, I said to him, 'When I was up in your room, just now, I was looking at your books. Some of them are very good. I am going to ask you to be so kind as to lend me one for a few days: it is "Napier's India."' He seemed much pleased, and ran off directly to get it. When he returned, I said, 'There was one thought that came into my mind while I was looking at your books. If I had not known whose they really were, I should have supposed that they belonged to some one who had no interest in any thing beyond the

present life; One one who meant to get as comfortably as possible through that;—but that was all.'

"I suppose you mean, ma'am, there were no religious books there? As to those, I gave all them up long ago: I couldn't stand such twaddle.'

"Have you had a great experience of religious books?

"Why, no. I went to a Sunday-school once, but it wasn't much of it; and some ladies used to call and leave us some tracts, and beg us to read them. I didn't like to promise to do so, and not do it; but it was such "bosh!" Do you know, ma'am, after you had been here for a day or two, we were talking about you; and I said, "I do think she is one of the right sort; she doesn't bring us any tracts, or any twaddle."

"I am afraid I am going to lose my good character.'

"Oh, no, ma'am; I shall be happy to listen to any thing you have to say!

"Well, I want to hear what *you* have to say. It interests me very much to know how you are planning it out. Do you intend to make the best of this life; and then—*what*

then? Are you so pleased with it as to feel satisfied that all shall end here?’

“‘Why, as to being pleased with it, I don’t think anybody who has lived five-and-twenty years in the world can be much pleased with it. I am sure it a’n’t much to me. I’ve nobody, hardly, belonging to me, to care any thing about me; and if it wasn’t for the liking I have for books, and that sort of thing, I should have nothing but my work to do, and to eat and drink and sleep: and I don’t call that worth a living for: do you, ma’am?’

“‘No, indeed, I do not. I feel very sorry for you. I should so like to help you to be happier, if I only knew how; but, perhaps, if I told you what I think about it, you might call it “bosh,” or “twaddle,” or something of that sort.’

“‘No, ma’am, I shouldn’t. You see, ma’am, it isn’t because I haven’t thought about these things, for I thought myself almost crazy once; and the people who, I expected, might have helped me were worse to me than nobody. My father was a mighty religious man in his way, and dreadful strict: we couldn’t hardly speak or look of a Sunday but we got a thrashing for it. My brother and I have said, often

and often, that as soon as we took to the world for ourselves we'd have done with all that sort of thing; we had had enough of it. The masters I have worked for have made a great fuss, some of 'em, about their own religion; but they haven't minded cheating us a bit when they could do it in a quiet way. And as to caring about *our* souls, they have never troubled themselves about that. And don't you think, ma'am, that if they really thought we were going to burn in hell-fire forever if we went on a bad way, that they'd make some fuss about it, and try to stop us? I know, if I believed it, I wouldn't do much besides try to prevent people going there; but you may depend upon it, ma'am, they don't believe it: they keep it in store, like, as something to frighten poor ignorant people with.'

"'But I want to know what *you* think. I am not just now concerning myself about these people.'

"'Well, I have pretty much made up my mind, after all I have seen, just to take the world as it comes, and live on in the best way I can, and not trouble my head any more about it. I suppose God has got it all planned



out about us, and he'll do what he likes with us.'

"That is quite true. God has planned it all out; but then he has made no secret of his plans. He has written a book to tell us how we stand towards him, and how he stands towards us.'

"Ah! you mean the Bible. We used to be punished with having to learn chapters out of it, and we hated it; and I have never took up with it since. People talk about its being good news, and all that sort of thing; but I don't believe there is any good news in it for *me*.'

"Supposing, when you first came here, I had written a letter to you, inviting you to come to my house whenever you liked to do so, telling you that I would have a nice room prepared for you, and in every respect would make you as comfortable as possible; and supposing that, instead of reading my invitation and availing yourself of my kind offers, you had treated my letter with contempt, and refused even to open it, pleading as an excuse that a letter you once received proved disagreeable to you. If, after you left, I should hear that you spread an evil report about me

and accused me of unkindness, do you think I could properly reprove you for such injustice?’

“‘Yes; and I see what you mean. I can’t say I’ve tried to find out much about the Book, either good or bad.’

“‘There is another thing. I think that you have rather confused ideas about the character of God. You confound your earthly with your heavenly Father; and thus you think unjustly of him, and his works also. Now, as I cannot stay longer to-day, I am going to ask you to reward me for not troubling you with tracts, and what you call “twaddle,” by just reading one little chapter that I will leave turned down for you here.’

“I left him the fifteenth chapter of Luke to read; and he faithfully read it, and the next day we talked about it. He was too intellectual a man not to appreciate its exceeding beauty;—but he did not feel himself to be a prodigal needing the love and forgiveness of the kind Father: so that it was to him little else than a ‘pleasant song.’

“After many observations had passed, I asked if he were in the habit of attending

any place of worship. He answered, 'Oh, no! I have been to the cathedral sometimes, but I didn't like it.'

"This was Saturday. At the end of our conversation, I told him I thought he had better make one more trial of attending a place of worship; and, as he lived in Blackfriars, I recommended him to attend a chapel service near his residence. He promised he would. On Monday I did not get to the house till it was late. Some of the men had gone away; but this painter was still lingering over his work. 'Oh, ma'am,' he said, 'I am glad you have come. I wanted to see you, to tell you I went to the chapel you spoke about.'

"I am glad to hear it. I hope you will often go.'

"I believe I shall, for the preacher is something above a parson. I said to myself, "You a'n't a humbug, anyhow." I went in the morning, and I went again in the evening.'

"I had no time to talk to him then, nor for some days after. I think Friday of that week was set apart as a fast-day. On Thursday I found him painting away very busily. As soon as he saw me, he said, 'We have just

been talking about you, ma'am, and we know you are in a hurry to get this house done; and so, instead of knocking off work because it is the fast-day to-morrow, we are going to stick to our painting, and have a jolly good day at it.'

"I am very much obliged to you. Indeed, I think you are *all* very kind in trying to accommodate me, and I quite appreciate all you do; but I could not think of allowing you to do what you propose. You know the state the country is in, what terrible accounts we are constantly receiving from India, and what severe general distress there is. Although we may not be suffering from these calamities, it would be selfish and heartless in the extreme not to join with those who are, in praying for God's mercy to deliver us out of these troubles.'

"Well, ma'am, that's all very right, I dare say; and I don't object to the thing itself; but what I object to is the way it is done in. I was reading the proclamation the other day; and it says that we are *commanded* on that day to pray to Almighty God. Now, I don't think any one has a right to command us to do any thing of the sort; and, if I pray at all, I shall do it some other day.'

"I gave you credit for being a wiser man. What would become of law and order in this country, if some one had not the power to decide such things? There would be no end of contest and confusion. I don't suppose that either you or I should make very good rulers; but, if there was no one else, it would be much better for the country to give one of us the power of saying what should or should not be done, than to leave every question open to be contested. And as to your taking offence at the expression "command," it is merely a form of words.'

"Another man then joined in, and said that he thought 'what the nation wanted more than fast-days was better government. The government was always getting the country into trouble, and then setting it to pray itself out of it again.'

"If that is the case, that would be a very good reason in itself for having a fast-day,' I said, 'that we might pray for better government.'

"Most of the men joined in this talk about governments. It was evidently a topic upon which they were much in the habit of con-

versing; and I could not but be struck with the shrewdness of their observations.

"At last I said, 'Now, after all you have told me about oppressive governments, bad laws, taxation, and all that, you have not brought forward one thing that would for a moment stand in the way of your following any occupation you like, and becoming great in it; choosing any kind of home your industry and resources would enable you to command; reading what books you like; adopting what form of religious worship you like; sending your children to any school you like, and taking up with any friends you like: so that I cannot offer you much sympathy for the oppressions of which you are complaining. But there is something going on in this country that is oppressing you. I think, if you could prove there was any thing in the present government which caused the destruction of life and property to ten thousand persons every year, it would excite such indignation in the country that the government would hardly stand another week.'

"'I should think not,' one of them said.

"'And yet there is something going on among us that is destroying at least sixty

thousand precious souls and bodies every year; and I have often wondered that you men, who have such ability to detect and expose the faults of a government (which, after all, is not hurting you much, and which you are not likely to alter), should expend uselessly the power that might be successfully directed against the monster evil to which I am referring.'

"You mean the drink, I suppose, ma'am?"

"Yes. Now, here is an evil worth fighting against. If you directed all your efforts against *this* tyrannical government, and were determined to get rid of it, you would be doing much more good for yourselves, and the country too, than any legislature will ever do, even supposing all the members of it were elected from among yourselves.'

"Then followed a kind of tectotal discussion. Amongst other arguments brought against tectotalism, the painter objected that 'people who lived altogether upon food ate such a lot that they got heavy and stupid in their minds.' I asked him if he knew that the preacher he had heard last Sunday was a water-drinker.

"Dear me! no: I never could have thought

it. What! he only drink water? Well, that's a good un! I'd drink water too, if I thought I could get such a headpiece as his out of it. I said to myself, on Sunday, when I was hearing him, "Now, you are a right sort of a man: if I could be like you, I shouldn't get tired of being alive, as I do now sometimes."

"No, indeed: if you were like him, you would not get tired of living, nor be afraid of dying, either. Now, suppose you set up from this day to try to be like him. You know that his nature is no better than your's. God has made him what he is, and is ready to do every thing for you that he has done for him."

"Well, I think, as we are not to work here to-morrow, I shall go and hear what he has to say about things; for perhaps he'll preach a sermon about the country, or something of that sort. I have been wondering, this week, how *he* thinks about what's going on. I have thought of a lot of things I should like to ask him about."

"He not only went himself to the chapel, but took some of his comrades; and many of their future discussions were grounded upon what they there heard.



"I saw this man once more, about a month after the house was finished. He told me he went every Sunday; and, 'ma'am,' he added, 'I do believe I am beginning to see some things very different from what I did.'"

We separated that evening with the pleasant feeling that we had become better acquainted, and had found more subjects of common interest than we had expected.

Exception may be taken, and with apparent justice, that I have made no effort to disabuse the mind of this man of its many prejudices and antipathies. Formerly, when I was not so well acquainted with the habits of thought and feeling among working-men as I now am, I used to expend considerable time and trouble in endeavouring to remove their prejudices; but it never appeared to me that I effected any real good in this way. The men were usually so far beyond me in acuteness and capacity to detect and expose what they considered inconsistencies, that if I succeeded in clearing one victim from imputation, another was readily substituted. I have, therefore, come to the conclusion that it is better, from the first, to treat it as something altogether irrelevant, and not worthy of notice.

Instead of wasting precious time and losing opportunities that may never again present themselves, in arguing about the right and the wrong of other people, I usually meet such attacks in this way:—"Supposing these people are as bad as you say, I cannot see that their faults can make any difference to you, except to induce you to be more careful that you yourself entirely abstain from what you seem so to dislike in others. God's law is, 'So, then, every one of us must give an account of himself to God.' He has written a perfect law that we may study it and seek to conform ourselves to it; and, to prevent the possibility of our erring through the want of a living example, he has himself, in the person of Jesus Christ, lived our earthly life to teach us how to live. Your making your own conduct depend so much upon what other people do, is like the folly of a man who would shut the shutters of his room, excluding all daylight, and then complain that the dim, flickering, uncertain light of the candle he had substituted was insufficient to enable him to do his work properly! If this man, when taking home his work, were to excuse himself to the master for its being so badly done, on

the ground that the light of his candle was insufficient and uncertain, his master would reply, 'I never intended you to work by that light; it is none of my providing. You wilfully shut out the glorious sun, set up for your use in the heavens, and which I knew would be more than sufficient for every purpose. Whilst you were groping about almost in the dark, it was even then surrounding you, waiting only to be permitted to enter. The blame of this bad work, therefore, returns upon you, and upon you only.'

It will often happen at a later period of intimacy with such characters as the one previously described, and when a more reasonable state of mind has taken the place of harsher feelings, that the subject of these antipathies can be renewed with advantage. I remember, in the case of this man, one of the last conversations I had with him was in reference to remarks he had been making about some distinguished person whose conduct to him appeared inconsistent. I said to him, "A few days ago, I had to insist upon one of my children doing something she did not like to do. A short time afterwards, I happened to hear her saying to herself, 'When I am grown up

to be a woman, I shall not do as my mother does. I shall do a great deal better, and let my children do every thing they like.'

"If you had been by, you would probably have said, 'When you are a woman, you will alter your opinion on that subject.' You would not, probably, by this remark, do much to remove the impression from the mind of the child that she was right and I was wrong; but you would be satisfied that experience would justify you in what you had said.

"I believe we often resemble this child in the estimate we form of people who are moving in an entirely different sphere from our own. I have no doubt, if you could for one week occupy the places and take upon yourself the responsibilities of these people against whom you have so much to say, as great a transition would take place in your mind respecting them as there will probably be in the mind of this child if she ever assumes the duties she now supposes are so badly performed; and your wonder would rather be that, amidst the trials, temptations and heavy responsibilities attached to their exalted position, you had not been able to detect even more apparent inconsistencies of conduct."

"Well, ma'am," the man replied, "I see what you mean, and I will think it over, for I have begun to see lately that I am not always so over-right myself. But ma'am, I don't think this ill judging, that you complain of, is all on one side. If we poor men do make the mistake of judging the rich too harshly, I am sure the rich don't forget to 'pay us back in our own coin.'"

"I am afraid there is much truth in what you say. This want of consideration for one another is a general evil that pervades all society, and is, at the present time, causing a great deal of unhappiness in this country. I have no doubt you have had employers whose conduct towards you seemed to be entirely influenced by the amount of work they could get out of you. But, whilst you could justly charge them with this, must you not at the same time have pleaded guilty if you had been accused of entertaining much the same sentiment towards them?"

"It is not because one man is rich and another poor that there is so little kindly feeling between the two classes, neither is it altogether that one is learned and the other unlearned; for, much as there is to deplore in

the present state of society, we have still beautiful instances of the most faithful and genuine friendship existing between the serving and the served. It is not, I am persuaded, this difference of position that is at the root of the mischief: it is the mistaken *feeling* that one class bears to another. It is the hard words that you speak, and the unjust thoughts that you and your comrades encourage each other to entertain towards the rich, that help to make society wrong. And it is because the more favoured classes do not honour you for your skill, industry and ability, and acknowledge their dependence upon you, that this wrong is perpetuated."

I have sometimes wondered, if an angel were to be sent from heaven to endeavour to set us all right on the subject of our duties and feelings one towards another, whether he would give his first lesson to the employers or the employed; but neither party need wait for the extraordinary teaching of a celestial visitant. An angel would bring with him no new lesson-book: he would point out to us for our guidance a few verses from an old and inspired volume, that have been trying to make

themselves heard among us for the last eighteen hundred years:—

“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.”

“And be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.”

“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.”

“The workshop must be crowded  
That the palace may be bright;  
If the ploughman did not plough,  
Then the poet could not write.  
Then let every toil be hallow'd  
That man performs for man,  
And have its share of honour  
As part of one great plan.

“Ye men who hold the pen,  
Rise like a band inspired;  
And, poets, let your lyrics  
With hope for man be fired,  
Till the earth becomes a temple,  
And every human heart  
Shall join in one great service,  
Each happy in his part.”

## CHAPTER V.

## HOMES AND NO HOMES.

"The grief that sits beside the hearth,  
Life has no grief beside."

TOWARDS the close of 1853, I commenced a Mothers' Society, and the following letter will be found to contain an account of its establishment and early progress. It is addressed to a dear friend, in answer to a letter of inquiries from her. As similar inquiries have frequently been made since, by persons interested in the same way, I think it best to give the letter entire:—

"7 St. JAMES SQUARE, Dec. 8.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIEND:—I fear you must have thought me very dilatory in replying to your last kind letter, containing so many inquiries respecting our Mothers' Society. In consequence of your asking for a *minute* history of its rise and progress, and



putting, besides, so many definite questions, I felt that the limit of a common letter would be quite insufficient, and I have therefore been compelled to wait for a day of more than ordinary leisure. As, I see, you request me to go back so far as to tell you what made me think such a thing desirable or possible, I must, indeed, lose no time in beginning.

"Although it must be more than ten years since I had the pleasure of working with you in the management of the Bath Female Friendly Society, I dare say you have not forgotten what queer characters we used sometimes to come in contact with. I remember a few desperate cases, where, when every thing else had failed, we at last succeeded in making some impression through their children. One of the most remarkable instances of this kind I have related, just as it occurred, in a letter which I addressed to the society, when I was obliged to be absent a few weeks in the spring.\* From that time I have always been deeply impressed with the idea that, under judicious

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\* This letter is given in the chapter of "Letters," in the latter part of this volume.

treatment, this softer and better portion of woman's nature might be so taken advantage of as to lead to excellent moral results.

"But I never had any definite idea of reducing these thoughts to practice; and they would, in all probability, have remained quietly in my own mind, if I had not come in contact with those whose juster views of the value and shortness of life had led them to *work*, as well as think, whilst it is day.

"One afternoon, the autumn before last, I was sitting alone, and had taken up the morning paper, when my attention was arrested by the report of a speech of the Earl of Shaftesbury. I forget the object of the meeting, neither do I remember the exact words used, although the idea at once impressed itself. He was speaking hopefully of the good effected through ragged and other schools. 'But,' he said, 'I have long felt that until the HOMES of these poor children are better—until the fathers and mothers are better men and better women—our schools can accomplish comparatively little. I believe that any improvement that could be brought to bear on the mothers, more especially, would effect a

greater amount of good than any thing that has yet been done.'

"I laid down the paper, and thought for some time, wondering what could be done, and wished that somebody would do something. But I had advanced no further than this, when the arrival of visitors gave my thoughts another direction.

"The next morning, whilst I was busy with my children, I was told that the city missionary wished to see me. The object of his visit was to tell me that a large room in the neighbourhood was to be rented for a Girls' Evening School, and he thought it could be spared one evening in the week for a mothers' meeting. He knew some poor women who would attend; and he asked me to take the management of it. From my ignorance of the practical working of such a society, I felt very much at a loss to know how to commence it, and was inclined to think that I had neither the ability nor the time to conduct it.

"I could not, however, but remember how remarkably my attention had been several times drawn to this subject, and the various incidents which had again and again impressed it on my mind. But the thought that weighed

most of all with me was—I knew I had a most entire sympathy with poor mothers; that of all things in the world I most wished to try and do something to show how much I cared for their great difficulties and sufferings; and, though I might fail to render them much real service, I trusted the truthfulness of my feelings towards them would manifest itself, and that this might lead to some good result. At any rate, I resolved to try, and to trust that the way would open, and that light would come.

“It was on the first Monday in November, 1853, that I walked to the nicely-lighted and pleasant room provided for us. About seven or eight women were assembled, and two or three came in afterwards. I thought they looked at me much as they would have done at the entrance of the white bear from the Zoological Gardens,—that is, provided he were caged; for the stare had no fear in it, though abundance of curiosity.

“They said they were glad I was come, for they did not know what they were met there for; they ‘s’posed I did.’ I said I was prepared to explain it to them; but I wished to begin by reading a few verses of Scripture. This they submitted to pretty well; but, as

soon as it was over, they began talking all round to each other, in by no means particularly soft voices. I knew that, as long as the game of 'Who can shout loudest' was to be played, I had no chance; and, not wishing to show my weak side at the first meeting, I remained perfectly silent, and listened, as far as I could, to the observations which were made principally *at me*, but not to me.

"At last they seemed rather struck at the isolation of my position, and there was a lull. Then I told them I certainly had not called them together without having something to say to them. I had far too high an estimate of the value of their time. As soon as they caught the idea that some kind of improvement was contemplated in their domestic affairs, they began again. If that was what I was after, I should have had such and such a one, for 'she sarved her children dreadful.' Then followed no end of narratives of the wickedness of their neighbours; and many of the cruelties that mothers can be guilty of came out in detail. One woman said she was 'always a trying to do 'em good, and told 'em what they should do; but, instead

of doing it, they jist up and sarced at her in a minnit.'

"I was the more amused at this last expression, as I thought it rather aptly described my own position just then, though I must, in justice, pause here to remark that, with only one exception, I have never, *from the very first, received direct impudence from any of them.* When the hour expired, and we rose to depart, I knew that very few who were there would return; but I requested them to send those very wicked neighbours of their's; and, as they themselves seemed impressed with the desirableness of doing so, I left, with the hope that the publicans and sinners might be brought to hear, though the Pharisees would not.

"As I am giving this history simply from recollection, having kept no kind of memoranda, I cannot be certain of perfect correctness when I speak of numbers; but I remember the attendance became less and less, until—I think it must have been about the fourth evening—I entered the room at the usual hour, and no one was there! The general arrangement of the room had been even more than usually carefully attended to,

through the thoughtfulness of our kind city missionary. It was well lighted, and the fire burned cheerfully. My chair was placed in a 'chosen spot,' and a Bible lay on the table before it; but no one came. I opened the Bible, and read; and, though I cannot give any effect to this narrative by speaking of the remarkable appropriateness of the passage that happened to fix my attention, I distinctly remember losing, under the influence of its holy power, all sense of vexation and disappointment; and the solitude soon appeared in the light of a most valuable opportunity for praying, long and earnestly, for those I so much desired to serve. I felt perfectly resigned to his will, either to fit me for it, to raise up others, or to give me to see clearly that this was not the work he had appointed me to do. About a quarter of an hour before the time for closing, a woman came in with a bottle of medicine in her hand. She had been coming to the meeting; but her husband had been taken ill, which had obliged her to go in search of medicine for him instead. On her return, she thought she would just step in and see how we were getting on. I had noticed that this poor woman had

seemed far more interested than any one who had yet attended; and I was glad of an opportunity of becoming better acquainted with her. She told me that her husband had formerly been an infidel; but through the influence of a tract that was left at the house, combined with the effects of the visits of the missionary, he had become entirely changed. She described, with great simplicity, how the alteration gradually manifested itself,—how at first he did not like her to see him praying, and how she took care to keep out of the way at the time. Then he came to praying *before* her, and then *with* her and the children; and now no day passed without their united supplications ascending to the Author of their mercies. Then followed the description of what John used to be, and what he now was,—what the house was then, and what it was now. All this was narrated with beautiful simplicity. I never felt more emphatically that 'surely I know it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him,' and that the only cure for the sting of poverty is that every family should be governed by the principles which influenced



this one. I need hardly add that the meeting that night was for my benefit.

"But I am entering too much into detail, and must pass on more rapidly. About six weeks after that solitary evening, there were at least twenty-five present; and let me give you an idea of the improvement in their manners. It happened that I was a minute or two late. They were nearly all assembled. As I entered the room, they all rose, and remained standing till I was seated. And this was by no means in consequence of any lectures I had given them on manners. I should have considered it as much as my place was worth to have offered such instruction.

"From having frequently heard a difficulty as to the time which these meetings took from their work, I thought of a plan for supplying their fingers whilst their minds were occupied in listening to what was passing in the way of instruction. Various material for clothing were provided, and the clothes sold to members of the society, as they needed them, at a reduction of fifteen per cent. Good patterns were also provided, free of charge. In this way, during the winter, most of these women made several

garments for themselves and their children; and, as the payments were usually only a few pence at a time, the total cost appeared to them very trifling. In addition to this, a savings-bank was established, and some of the depositors saved as much as seven or eight shillings.

"As the summer advanced, the attendance, of course, lessened. The greater part of the poor people living in the Potteries, being brickmakers, can follow this occupation only in the summer, when they work early and late; and the wife often works too. We therefore thought it best to give up meeting from July to the end of September.

"As we parted, one of our members—a good woman, who had interested me very much—came to me, and, with tears in her eyes, spoke of the happy hours we had enjoyed there, and said the time would seem long till we met again. We little thought *how* long it would be. The Potteries was one of the first places visited by the cholera that year; and this good woman, to whom I was most sincerely attached, was one of the first victims. She was attacked one morning, and died in the evening. A sickly child, too,

who had long been the object of the greatest care and solicitude to this poor mother, followed her in a few hours, and one grave received them both.

"When we assembled in October, in addition to the inroads which death had made, a few members had left the neighbourhood; but still so many returned, and brought with them so many companions, that I saw it was quite impossible to carry on the society longer single-handed. Neither was there any occasion for doing so. Several ladies kindly offered their assistance, and we are now regularly organized.

"Another great advantage which we now enjoy is that within the last few months a clergyman has come to the parish, who, by his occasional presence among us and the kind interest that he takes in all connected with the society, is a source of much encouragement to us, as well as valuable assistance.

"And now, having given you an account of what may be called the building up of these meetings, I will answer your next inquiry:—'How do you manage to interest the mothers?' I must begin what I have to say on this subject by stating that I believe there is no so-

ciety in existence where there is so little difficulty in creating an interest, as in a society of mothers. In fact, you have not to create, but to take advantage of what already exists. A woman who will come to such a meeting at all will be sure not to be perfectly indifferent to the improvement of her children; although it is lamentable to see how habitual selfishness will sometimes almost obliterate even this first principle of nature. But, believe me, there are few cases, very few, where, under right influence, this feeling cannot be restored and brought into living action, and always with great benefit to the general character.

"We commence by reading a passage of Scripture, and with prayer. In the prayer, besides mentioning the peculiar difficulties and sufferings incident to a poor mother's life, any cases occurring among them particularly demanding sympathy are mentioned, in order to be made the subject of our united supplications. I believe that this has done much to give a kindly interest in one another; for the instances we have had of their sympathy for each other in times of distress have been truly beautiful.

"When they have all settled to their work,

and the money-affairs are over, I generally make a few inquiries as to what occurred at the past meeting,—whether any plan then recommended has failed or succeeded. For instance, a better domestic observance of the Sabbath was the subject for two evenings. This led, among many other things, to a conversation on the best way of arranging about the Sunday dinner, so that it really might be the best in the week, and yet leave as little work as possible connected with it to be done on that day.

“Experiments in cooking, and, indeed, any thing belonging to their pre-eminently practical life, they seem much to enjoy, and they are eager to relate, at the next meeting, either success or failure.

“I find that, when they can be induced to make the effort, their experience helps them to arrive at conclusions of far more value than any mere theoretical suggestions; and I have often the pleasure of seeing the ideas which I may have thrown out serve them as a kind of scaffolding, useful only as enabling them to erect a building more adapted to their own mode of life and circumstances.

“A few evenings since, I was saying to

them how much better it would be to try to employ and direct children's energies, than to be so often punishing them for inconvenient manifestations of them. I showed them the German plan of amusing children for a length of time with little bundles of sticks that could be arranged in a variety of forms; also, how to cut out paper, patchwork, &c. I said,—

“You will find that children will keep themselves amused much longer, and far more earnestly, if you will treat their rational play with some respect, and not do violence to their feelings, by applying to it such terms as “mess,” “stuff,” “bother.””

“One woman looked up from her work, having evidently thoroughly received the idea, and said,—

“‘There, now! how often I’ve said to ‘em, “Get along with your bother!” I jist wish I hadn’t.’”

“At the next meeting, I asked this woman if she had tried any of the amusements. She said,—

“‘Oh, ma’am, I have never had such a week before with the children: they builded all over the table two or three times a day; and I told them, when they made a very nice house, to

let mother see; and the little "critters" were so pleased, and "*we haven't had no beatin.*"

"About a quarter before nine o'clock, our missionary comes in, and concludes all with a concise, well-adapted address, and a short prayer. I must take this opportunity of stating that I attribute our success, under God's blessing, quite as much to the excellent influence which he has exercised without, as to any thing that has been done within. In visiting the women and inducing them, in the first place, to attend the meeting, he has taken a part which I could not; and by his wise and timely suggestions he has often saved me from mistakes.

"We did not start with the rules as they now exist; we were not then ripe for them; but, as the right time came, I introduced them, and they were passed with the full consent of the whole meeting. Hence the mothers view themselves—and justly—as governed by their own laws.

"You inquire, still further, how, with so many domestic claims of my own, and not enjoying good health, I find time to attend to such a society. Perhaps you have been thinking, when you pay us your long-promised

visit, how much half-cooked meat you will have to eat, whether the potatoes will not sometimes be lost by being placed in the coal-scuttle, and so forth.

"After all that has been written and said both for and against mothers of families being allowed to do any thing besides 'minding their own business,' it seems to me that the question resolves itself simply into this:—Is the occupation in unison with home-duties, and can it chime in with them? Or is it something that will divert the thoughts and actions into an entirely different channel? If you could see the great pleasure which my children derive from hearing about the society and working with me, you would be the first to beg me to continue it for their sakes. On the morning succeeding a meeting, they come round me with numerous inquiries after some mother or baby whom they have learned to know through hearing me speak of them. They have, of their own accord, set apart one day in the week for working for the little children of those mothers who are very poor; and when, the other day, they heard me speaking of a poor woman who was lamenting that she could not read, they immediately



offered to go two or three times a week to teach her.

"It seems to me that the few hours a day which we set apart for teaching our children (for 'school,' as we call it) have far less to do with the formation of their character than that which they see and hear constantly going on around them. It is the every-day incidents of life that impress children; and, if it had only been for their sakes, I do not know that I could have thought of any thing better fitted to prepare them for what I wish them to be,—followers of Him 'who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.'

"There is another thing that helps me. You know, our servants are neither 'necessary evils' nor 'natural enemies;' they are, indeed, our friends and helpers; and, from remaining with us so long, they become as much interested as we are in every thing that is going on; and, by their sympathy and thoughtfulness in clearing away impediments, they render us most valuable assistance. Thus, no mornings are taken up abroad in inquiring for characters, or at home in what is called 'looking after them.'

"Another plan I find very useful is, not to

allow every day to be encumbered with every kind of work. One day is set apart for every thing connected with this society, which has then the best of my thoughts, and as much work expended upon it as can be given without interfering with regular duties; and if it attempts to intrude itself upon the wrong day, it is told to 'bide its time.'

"'But the "ill health" you mention?' Yes, that is a drawback, yet not entirely so. It is certainly true that I have sometimes risen from my bed to attend the meeting; but then I always tell the mothers so, and appeal to their compassion, reminding them that, though I cannot speak loud, they can be quiet; though I cannot enforce order, they can maintain it; and I really believe that the secret of our so soon getting into order was the working of the spirit of sympathy with me. As soon as they felt that something depended upon them, they set about it in good earnest. But, that I may not by this convey to your mind any wrong idea of the kind of discipline necessary, I will just say that such an appeal must always be made to them as a company,—that any thing approaching to a monitorial system would be ruinous in such a meeting, since

nothing requires more watchfulness than to keep down the spirit of jealousy. A good presiding officer must be really absolute, though as little apparently so as possible.

"Long as this letter is, I will not apologize for it. I feel that to you there is no occasion for apology; for I have perfect confidence in your sympathy. I could write another still longer; and it would give me far more pleasure to do so than this has given. It would be full of incidents, showing how the sunshine of kindness will bring to life that which, having been so long covered up by the frost and snow of neglect, had been supposed to be extinct.

But adieu, my dear friend.

"Your's, most affectionately,

"———"

## CHAPTER VI.

## DIFFICULTIES.

"Be useful where thou livest, that they may  
Both want and wish thy pleasing presence still.  
Kindness, good parts, great patience, are the way  
To compass this. Find out men's wants and will,  
And meet them there. All worldly joys go less  
To the one joy of doing kindnesses."

GEORGE HERBERT.

SOME time ago I received a letter, in which the following remark occurs:—"Among the number of women whom you have had to do with in this society, you surely cannot always have escaped meeting with what we call queer characters, even if not desperate ones. There is a class of unmanageable women in the world, of whom I am more afraid than of any thing else; and the very thought of them deterred me from commencing a society open to any one, and, consequently, open to such as I have referred to."

The difficulty mentioned here will generally be experienced to a greater or less extent at the commencement of these societies; and in the establishment of them it should by all means be anticipated and considered. But after a time, when the greater part of the members have conformed to law and order, the general disposition will be manifested so strongly in the right direction that the rebellious individuals will either make up their minds to conform or to leave. There is a quiet way of meeting sauciness, which very soon disarms it. It is some trouble to be saucy; and when nothing is gained by it—not even amusement—the attempt is generally relinquished as not worth the effort.

I think it was the second winter after we were established, that a fine, tall woman presented herself, and said that she wished to be admitted. I told her of our usual arrangements, and asked her if she would like to have some material for work. She said, "No; not that night. She should look about her, and see how she liked it." She took a seat just before me, sat with her arms crossed, and hardly kept her promise of looking about her, as she stared at me all the time. In about

half an hour she got up, and said she should go, as it was duller than she expected.

The next week, to my great surprise, she came again. She said that she wanted some material for work, and asked if we had any thing good enough for her. She was supplied with what was required, and she took it away to her seat, but brought it back again in a few minutes, saying, "It wasn't such stuff as that she wanted." I took the flannel from her, put it back into the box, shut the box, and went on reading, leaving her standing at the table; while every one else was quietly working and listening. She looked at me steadily for some minutes, in the hope of my "having a row with her;" but, as I took no kind of notice, and continued to read without even raising my voice, she presently walked across the room, upsetting a few things in her way, opened the door, and, bouncing out, banged it after her, so as to shake the whole room.

During the next week I made a few inquiries about her, and was told she was "the best hand in the Potteries at a row."

"Law, ma'am! have you got Mrs. A— among you? Why, she'll soon upset you all. Why, when she goes with the men into the

public-house, they're all afeard of her. There's never no peace where she is."

This account quite confirmed the opinion which I had formed, that she was a woman of great energy and uncommon ability; while, if that energy and ability could only be turned to some proper use, she might be just as valuable as she was now mischievous. But the difficulty was how to get at such a person, with whom one had so little in common. I confess I rather hoped that I should see no more of her. But the next week she was there again, and again asked for work. I gave her what she had refused the week before, which she took without saying a word, and went away to her seat.

Whilst taking the money for the work, and settling the accounts, I did not require the women to be quiet,—that is *their* time for saying to one another what they wish; so that I did not take any notice of the very loud tone in which my new and formidable member conversed, nor of her subject, which was principally a running commentary upon my proceedings. At length I took the Bible, and, sitting down, all the mothers put aside their work and remained quite silent. This

woman, however, kept cutting out and talking on, pretending that she did not observe the change. After waiting a minute or two, I said to her, "We do not continue the work while the chapter is being read. We think it a respect due to the word of God to sit quietly and listen."

"Then I suppose I must waste my time too?"

"I am very sorry you think it a waste of time; but you certainly must do as the rest. No one is *obliged* to come here, but whoever chooses to come *must conform* to our rules."

She threw down her scissors, and sat out the reading with a very ill grace. Had there been any one to side with her, I believe we could hardly have escaped "a scene;" but she seemed rather an object of dislike to the rest. They were annoyed at the interruption which she had caused, and she met with no encouragement. She subsided considerably after another week or two; and her sole mode of annoyance consisted in saying, partly to herself, and partly to her next neighbour, while I was speaking, in a tone that I might or might not hear, as I pleased,—

"*That's* nothing new." "Ev'rybody knows



that, I sh'd think." "I wonder where she picked that up!" &c.

I tried at first the effect of not hearing; but, as that experiment did not succeed, I thought I must adopt some other means. One evening I heard her muttering, in reference to something which I had just said,—

"I knew all that long ago, and a pretty deal more, too."

I stopped, and, looking directly at her, said,—

"Mrs. A——, I have just heard you say, 'I knew all that long ago, and a pretty deal more, too.' Now, if that is the case, I should like you to tell us what you do know. The object of this meeting is to get all the information we possibly can upon subjects of this kind, and I shall be delighted to learn any thing from you; and so, I am sure, will every one else here. One of our rules is, that one speaker should speak at a time; but it does not at all follow that *I* should always be the speaker. I will leave what I was going to say, as any other time will do, and we will listen to you."

There was a murmur of dissatisfaction at this; but I quelled it directly, stating that

"I wished there should be no interruption: we would all be perfectly quiet, and would listen to what Mrs. A—— had to say."

After a minute or two, another woman attempted to speak; but I stopped her.

"Any thing you like, presently; but this is Mrs. A——'s time."

Poor Mrs. A——! it was her time, indeed. There we sat; the clock went "tick, tick," the needles went "click, click," although most of the workers stopped in astonishment. Even the babies did not relieve us by a squall. The silence was terrible. Mrs. A—— would have known how to act in a storm; there she would have been in her element,—none could out-storm a storm better than she; but this calm was dreadful. She had sense enough to know she had brought this difficulty upon herself,—that I was simply standing on one side, to let her folly fall directly upon herself. She did not say any thing, but it was evident she inwardly writhed under the infliction, even more than I had expected; and I have thought, since, that the punishment partook of the refinement of cruelty. After this silence had lasted three or four minutes, I observed that I supposed she did not remember what she had intended

to say; and I went on again where I left off, as if nothing had happened.

When the meeting was over, and the women were going out, I saw Mrs. A—— standing irresolutely near the door. She evidently did not like to leave without "giving it to me well;" and yet she had sense enough to know there was no one to blame but herself. I called to her, and asked her if she would arrange the work-bags for me. She came back, and, before she had finished, the other women were all gone, and we were alone. I then said to her,—

"Mrs. A——, it has been no pleasure to me to make you feel so uncomfortable this evening. I have been waiting for some weeks past, in the hope that your own good sense would show you the necessity of accommodating yourself to our plans and rules. I can scarcely make as much excuse for your behaviour as I should for a child. A child is often compelled to go where he does not like; but every one who comes here comes of her own free will, and need never pay a second visit if it is not agreeable."

"I wish I had never come a-nigh the place."

"You have been uncomfortable this even-

ing, I know; but you forget how many evenings before this you have made *me* uncomfortable. If only a very few were to act as you have done, our meetings would be brought into such disorder that it would be folly to attempt to meet at all. One principal thing for which many of these women value the meetings is, that they are *quiet*. It would be no kindness to them to bring them out of the bustle and confusion of home into another scene of bustle and confusion. Now, will you answer me this one question? Do you think I should be a fit person to preside over this meeting if I could not and did not check such annoyance and interruption as you have caused?"

"Why, no: I do think I am a sort of a fool." And the long-pent-up feelings of mortification began to vent themselves in tears.

"I did not think that," I replied. "I have often looked at you, and admired the ability and energy which you have shown. Why, I think you could cut out work faster than any three of the rest of us put together; and you have a good idea of order and arrangement, too. I have already learned some things of

you, and you could help me a great deal, if you would."

"I don't think I shall come here any more."

"I would advise you to stay away for a month. By that time, all that has passed will be forgotten. If you will call on me at my house, this day week, in the afternoon, I shall be happy to see you; and when we have had a long chat together, we shall be better acquainted."

She came. I found it as I had expected. Next to the unrenewed nature, the evil had its rise in great physical strength, and mental energy never fully expended. Her husband was what they call "a quiet man," perhaps more easily managed than she liked; and her two children went to school, and did not give her much trouble. But it was not so much the want of occupation (for her pig-feeding establishment must have made great demands upon her time) as a kind of mental restlessness, which nothing in her mechanical life could absorb. The mischief done by a river in overflowing its banks will never be remedied by damming the water back on itself: it will only return again and again. Fresh channels must be dug for it, and then the

same element that previously spread destruction will produce verdure and fertility.

I was able to suggest several subjects to this poor woman, which both interested and occupied her. She was one of the most expeditious cutters-out of work that I have ever seen. She reminded me of the lady who said "her scissors knew the way." During the first winter, and before the society became so large, I was in the habit of cutting out most of the work for the mothers; but now I engaged Mrs. A—— to come to the room half an hour before the time, to help me. I used to take patterns of some things that were not made up in the room,—things that I thought would be useful to them. These I confided to her, with a quantity of paper, by which she could reproduce them to any one who might wish for them. Many a well-fitting garment to be seen in the Potteries has been procured in this way. Since our plans have been altered, and each member cuts out her own work, many an unskilful, trembling hand has been relieved by these "scissors that know the way." Several of our little orderly methods, also, for which *I* have been complimented by visitors, were originally sug-

gested by the former disturber of our peace. She is now a great reader. One of the last books which I lent her was "Sandford and Merton."\* She told me, when she returned it, that she often kept her own boys and half a dozen others quiet, for an hour or two together, by reading aloud to them.

The deep attention with which she always listens to the reading of the word of God, and the great improvement that has taken place in her habits of life, induce me to hope that, if she has not found, she is at least earnestly seeking, Him who can "save to the uttermost."

There is another character, however, which is met with,—to me, far more difficult and trying than that to which my friend has referred. Saucy women are seldom deceptive. The surface is often worse than that which remains hidden. But the bland, smooth-faced ones, who agree to every thing you say, compliment you upon every thing you do, smile

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\* Such books as "The Boundary-Tree," "Peep at my Neighbours," "The Week," "The Workingman and his Friends," "The Labourer's Wife," or "Old James," are books that might also afford instruction and entertainment, to keep such companies quiet.

sweetly alike at either censure or praise, and talk against you as soon as your back is turned, —what can be done with such people? Fortunately for me (for I am still as much at a loss as ever to answer this question), this is not a common type of character in the Potteries. Although I have, of course, had constant money-transactions with the women, I cannot now recall more than seven or eight cases in which the least attempt has been made to overreach and deceive; and only in one instance have I lost money by lending it.

But the climax of evil in a woman is the habit of drinking. There are many more drunkards among men than among women, certainly; but, whilst I have known many men reform, I have known but very few women amend after having thus once fallen into this horrid vice. Whether it be that a woman who has given way to intemperance feels so utterly degraded and out of place as to be hopeless of ever righting herself again, and that she consequently proceeds desperately from bad to worse, I cannot tell; but certainly the effects of this vice upon herself, her husband and her family are terrible in the extreme. No tongue can express what the child



of the drunken mother suffers. I cannot think of such misery without tears.

Two wretched little children, almost destitute of clothes, came to my door one bitterly cold day. The very sight of them made my children cry; and, contrary to my judgment (for, alas! experience has made me wise), I allowed them to dress them in warm woollen jackets. Not many yards from the door, the mother was waiting for them: she took them at once to the pawn-shop, stripped the little shivering ones of the only warm garments which they had known for many a day, disposed of them for a trifle, and got drunk with the money! The next day the sufferings of one of these children were happily closed by death. I say, happily; for death is the only release—a release to be desired beyond every thing—for the drunken mother's child. Here we must weep for the living, and not for the dead.

The duties of life assigned to our working men and women require a well-developed physical constitution, as well as that mental power which gives firmness to endure. The early sufferings, privations and exposure which attend the infancy and childhood of the drunk-

ard's offspring almost preclude the possibility of the first; and the poor mind has, if any thing, a still worse chance. Then, with this enfeebled body and mind, the child grows up to take his place in society, unable to contend with physical labour, tortured with the constant cravings for stimulants which he has inherited, and is an easy prey to the numberless temptations which beset his path. Again I ask, is it any wonder that those who are daily watching these things with unspeakable sorrow should refuse to touch, taste or handle that which is the cause of such infinite misery?\*

Only a few women addicted to this fearful vice have joined our society, and they have never continued long in it. When the word of God is constantly read and explained, when it is made the foundation of *all* that is taught,—for our relative and domestic duties have not there been passed over,—deliberate living in sin becomes incompatible with the pureness

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\* Is it not a special wonder that, with such overwhelming evidence of the curses that follow in the train of strong drink, so many excitements and temptations to indulge in it should be tolerated, and even authorized by law to be presented to the senses of those who are least able to withstand them?

of the moral atmosphere diffused around. Many a deep sigh have I heard, as the prayer for the poor drunkard has gone up.

One evening, I was reading the fifteenth chapter of Luke. When we came to the words, "I will arise and go to my father," I said that some seemed to think that only a certain kind of prodigal would be received back in this way. I had often heard poor drunkards remark that there was no mercy for them,—they were given up,—they must be lost; whereas if we went back a little in the history, and remembered that it was said of this particular prodigal, "he wasted his substance in riotous living," it would seem that the drunkard was especially meant. I observed a poor, untidy, dirty woman sitting near me. She was weeping bitterly. Her distress was so great that I never felt such difficulty in steadying my voice and going on. After the meeting was over, she stayed behind to speak to me. She said, "Oh, ma'am, I have felt *lost* for years, as if nothing could save me; and the thought that I might *hope* quite overcame me: it was so new to me, I thought I should have sunk!" This woman attended regularly for a few weeks, and then

she was obliged to remove to a distance. I have not heard of her since. The neighbours told me she was "a deal steadier afore she left;" and I have hope in that word of which it is said, "It shall not return unto me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

In order to impress a portion of Scripture upon the minds of our members, I request them, after the prayer is over, to repeat a verse. This is not, of course, compulsory; but most of them comply, or attempt to comply. As some of them cannot read at all, and others very imperfectly, there are not many who repeat the passage correctly. I generally make a few remarks upon the verse which I select, with the hope that they will better remember it, and take it as their motto for the week.

I remember, one evening, I repeated, "Fear not, little flock: it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." I told them I once heard of a man who had a great deal of money,—more than he really knew what to do with. He had a brother, who was very poor, and who used sometimes to ask his

rich brother for help. One day he begged for the loan of a hundred dollars. The rich brother said he would advance the sum, on condition that the poor brother would write and promise never to trouble him any more. I contrasted this with God's way of bestowing his gifts upon us. He not only gives, but it is his good pleasure to give (as we say, sometimes, we are "happy" to do so and so), and he bestows, not a perishing sum of money, but a kingdom.

A poor chimney-sweep's wife, sitting near me, was evidently listening with even more than her usual earnestness. She could not read, neither could her husband, and they had no children old enough to go to school: therefore, repeating a verse was to her a considerable undertaking. She was, however, one of those energetic people who cannot bear to be left behind. A fragment of a verse, if nothing more, we were sure to get from her; and the mutilations did not trouble her, as she was not conscious of them. I saw, upon this occasion, she was bent upon getting possession of *this* verse; and I therefore took care to repeat it distinctly two or three times. Next week, when it came to her turn, she repeated, in a

triumphant voice, as if she thought her verse now as good as any one's, "Fear not, little flock: yer Father will be very 'appy to give yer the kingdom."

The narratives of Scripture, when explained and illustrated, interest them more than any story-book that I have ever found. The pressure of their domestic duties prevents many of them from attending a place of worship; and the imperfect way in which they read obliges them to give more attention to the words than to the sense, and keeps their stock of book-knowledge very small. The history of Daniel in the lions' den has the same charm for them as for children. I remember once, when reading the verse, "Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live forever," I said these words strikingly showed how perfectly calm and self-possessed the prophet was. We might have supposed, from the terrible position in which he was, that he would have said at once, "Oh, take me away from this dreadful place!" but, instead of that, he did not even forget to preface his answer to the king with the usual courtly phrase, "O king, live forever." After the meeting was over, I observed two women standing together and talk-

ing about this. One of them was an Irish-woman, and a professed Roman Catholic. She was saying to the other, "And jist to think, now, that he should have minded his manners, and all, at sich a time as that." Little expressions of this kind are not only amusing, but valuable as a criterion by which to judge how far the women understand what is said, and are interested in it.

A friend of mine, who attended the meeting once, was so much diverted by some of these original sayings and doings that she said, afterwards, "I am afraid you must find the society of polite people, who never say or do any thing but what is strictly correct, rather dull after this."

## CHAPTER VII.

## GIVING AND RECEIVING.

"The world's a room of sickness, where each heart  
Knows its own anguish and unrest!  
The truest wisdom there, and noblest art,  
Is his who skills of comfort best;  
Whom by the softest step and gentlest tone  
Enfeebled spirits own,  
And love to raise the languid eye,  
When, like an angel's wing, they feel him besting by."

KEBLE.

ONE principal motive which has induced me to write this little book is the hope that, by facts and illustrations, I might remove the idea of *difficulty* which many people attach to the management of such institutions as I have described. Many excellent and kind-hearted ladies have said to me, "I should be so afraid to attempt it. "It must require a very peculiar person, I am sure. I should never be able to interest them." These objections arise out of the mistaken notion that



the necessary qualifications belong more to the head than to the heart,—that some *great* thing is required of us, rather than a good thing.

I received a letter, a few days ago, from a gentleman at Plymouth, in which he tells me of the progress of a mothers' society in that town, conducted partly by his wife. Speaking of one of their tea-meetings, at which he had been present, he says, "Whilst there, I was much struck by the fact that, notwithstanding the great difference in our circumstances, our *wants* are much the same. We all have anxieties to be allayed, weaknesses to be supported, sins to be forgiven, hopes to be assured, and aspirations to be encouraged. The maladies of all classes are the same, and require the leaves of the tree given for the healing of the nations. In this view we are one with the poorest and the lowest, and we speak to them as one *of* them."

It is the realization of this great thought of being one with them, which is the true qualification. No amount of ability will avail without this. When the head is simply to be stored with knowledge, the greater the ability which the teacher possesses, the better. But

the evils that we hope to remove by meeting the poor in this way have more of a moral than a mental origin; and, consequently, they must be met as moral evils, proceeding from the frailty to which we are all liable. The great object of the teacher must be to awaken in the mind of the poor mother a deep sense of her *responsibility*; and this must be spoken of (and how truly!) as *our* responsibility. The very slighting way in which poor girls generally hear themselves mentioned, the little account in which they are held, the absence, in fact, of almost every thing that can make them feel of importance in society, induce a habit of thought very unfavourable to a conscientious discharge of their duties. The feeling I speak of is something perfectly distinct from either vanity or pride. It is the conviction that interests of great importance are re-committed to us, out of which arise duties for whose performance we shall be held responsible not only to society, but to Him who has consigned these sacred trusts to our care, saying, "Occupy till I come."

I was lately visiting one of our poor women whose progress I have now had the pleasure of watching for some years. She was lament-

ing the death of one of her favourite plants, and said,—

“I do like to see them pretty green things agin the white curtains. ’Tis something cheerful, like, for the children to watch. They looks after the buds and flowers as if they could see ’em grow.”

I replied, “The little slips you planted a few weeks ago will soon be up; and in the mean time your nice white curtains will make the room look very neat.”

“Yes: these white curtains I bought last aren’t quite so nice as I should like ’em to be.”

I smiled. I could not help looking back a few years, and remembering the wretched hovel in which I had first become acquainted with her and her children, when even a pair of clean hands or a clean face would have been as great a rarity as snow in harvest.

“Why, Mrs. R——,” I added, “you have become particular indeed. I see something new every time I come. I don’t know where you are going to stop.”

“Never, I hope, ma’am. We saves up, and gets one little thing after another; and such rejoicing goes on here at every fresh thing

that comes. The children have saved their halfpence for a long time past, and last week they bought two new hymn-books; and the first thing we hear in the morning, when we wakes, is their singing; and their voices is so pretty."

The children rushed to show their treasures, carefully unwrapped them from the paper, and produced two threepenny "Hymn-books." No landed proprietor could have felt richer or looked happier.

"I often think, ma'am," said the mother, "of how we was when you first came to us; and I often think, too, how I *could dare* to keep such a place for my poor husband and children as I did then. I hope the Lord has forgiven me."

Here was the secret of all this social improvement. "How can I *dare* to keep so much misery about me, that I could and ought to prevent? How can I *dare* to leave these children, whom God has intrusted to me to train for him, without trying in any way to prepare them either for time or for eternity? How shall I dare to stand before God's judgment throne, to give an account of the deeds done in the body?" It is this awakening of

conscience that alone enables a poor mother to see her true position, and gives her the courage and resolution to do her best for her husband and children, in the face of difficulties of which the rich have scarcely any idea. Where conscience has slumbered long, or (as in most cases) has never been aroused, the progress will often be slow; but let this right principle be once established, and the work is done.

In introducing subjects of a domestic nature, the word "*us*" should be more frequently used than "*you*." It is well sometimes to speak particularly of our own difficulties and mistakes. It helps our listeners to regard us as fellow-sufferers,—as friends, who can understand and sympathize with them. When a poor mother tells us how much misery the bad behaviour of her children is causing her, we must not say (though it might be true), "Ah! that is just the natural consequence of all your bad management. If you had only done what I advised, it would not have happened." It must be (and what mother cannot truthfully say so?), "Ah! I can feel for you; for my children trouble me a good deal sometimes, and occasion me much anxiety. I don't know what I should do, if I could not bring them

to God in prayer and hope in his mercy for them."

On one occasion, when about to leave home for a few weeks, I received a message from a poor woman, that several of her children had been attacked by fever. I could not, of course, go to her then; but I wrote to her the next day from the sea-side. I happened to mention, in my letter, that I was under some anxiety for the health of one of *my* children. In her reply, after thanking me for my remembrance of her, she said, "And I thank you very much for telling me about your own child being ill. I pray for her too when I pray for my own children; and I seem to feel more sure that God will hear me."

During the first year, as I have already mentioned, I had to conduct this society alone, being without the kind assistance which I now enjoy. I was, of course, very anxious that nothing should ever prevent my being there at the appointed time. I had at one time, for some days, been suffering from toothache; and, when the day for the meeting came, I was in such an unnerved state that the slightest noise distressed me very much. But, when the evening came, I felt that I must go.

I remember standing at the foot of the stairs, trembling in every nerve, and wondering how it was possible to mount to the top, and go into the room to face all the women. I had, indeed, to look up to "Him who giveth power to the faint;" and he did not forsake me.

After the preliminary business was over, and as I sat down to read, I said, "Now, though you are generally so quiet and orderly, I must ask you to-night to be, if possible, still more so. I have been suffering very much from pain in my face; and it has made me so nervous that I cannot bear any noise. When my children came to me to-day, after dinner, though they tried to be quiet, yet even their moving about made me so much worse that I had to send them away to the nursery. After they were gone, and the room was still, I thought that some of you, no doubt, suffered sometimes just in the same way, and that you had no nursery to send your children to; and I felt very sorry for you."

The Mrs. A—— mentioned in a former chapter was there. She had become a most zealous champion of mine. I cannot help laughing now at her tall, commanding figure, as she sat that evening, bolt upright in her

chair, looking round with an air of defiance, as much as to say, "Let me see any one dare to make a noise." If a chair creaked, or scissors dropped, her head went round in an instant. A little unfortunate boy, about four years of age, who came with his mother because he could not be left at home, was singled out as her special victim. He could not move, however quietly, without her threatening face and finger being directed towards him. She seemed to exercise some mysterious spell over him, as he scarcely withdrew his eyes from her; and at last, when a penny rolled off his lap under the table, he instantly followed it, and remained out of sight, as if unable to face her again after *that*. The energy of her character communicated itself to her needle. Presently this noisy needle stopped. I did not notice it at first, thinking that perhaps she was watching some fresh victim; but, as she continued idle, I looked up from my book, and said, "Are you waiting for any thing, Mrs. A——, that I can give you?"

"Why, ma'am, you see I forgot to bring the sleeves out of the box, when I fetched my work, and I can't go on any longer without 'em; but I have got such thick shoes on, I



thought I should make such a racket in fetching 'em, that I should upset you altogether, and I had rather not finish my work than do that."

I knew what a self-denial it must be to her not to drive on to the end of her work, when she had intended to do so; and I appreciated her kind consideration accordingly.

It has been quaintly said that "there are more points in which a queen resembles her washer-woman than in which she does not." Without dwelling upon these extremes, nothing is more certain than that whenever a lady goes among the poor, hoping to benefit them by her influence, she must be impressed much more by the points of resemblance that exist between them than by the points of difference. Mothers' societies have a peculiar advantage in this respect. The sufferings and joys attendant on the mother's life are common to all, and enable us to realize, more than any other circumstance or relation in life, that we are all children of one great family. The best lessons we can find for our poor sisters will be always those which we learn from our own hearts,—from our own actual, every-day experience. Sometimes I have repeated a portion

of Scripture with them, which I had previously read with my own children, telling them what remarks I made upon it and what the children said about it. This, besides interesting and amusing them more than a common explanation, has a better effect than saying, "You should teach your children so and so."

I should be afraid of the accusation of "telling as new what everybody knows," if I had not so often seen good and excellent people, from whom I could learn much on most other points, almost entirely fail in any thing which they attempted among the poor, just because they did not recognize the fact that the law of "doing as we would be done by" applies as much to our intercourse with the poor as with our equals. I remember a case in point. One of our poor mothers had for some months brought with her a very fine baby. He was a beautiful child, and so sweet-tempered that she had no difficulty in keeping him quiet. She was very proud of him, of course, and used to seat him on the table, and resort to a variety of little manoeuvres to induce us to notice and praise him. But when he began to cut his teeth, a sad change occurred. He became

thin and pale, and so did the poor mother, through her night-watching and hard work; and we could hardly recognize in them the bright child and happy mother we used to see. At last the little fair head became covered with sores,—very sorrowful to witness; and, instead of now showing off her child, the poor stricken mother concealed him as much as possible with her shawl, and sat apart from the rest of the company.

One evening a visitor came in, and stayed about an hour with us. She evidently had not been much accustomed to such society, and did not feel at home in it. Whilst I was taking the money for the work, she tried to talk to some of the women; but I saw that she found great difficulty in it. Presently a feeble cry attracted her attention to the poor baby, and, with a look of great disgust, she said to the mother,—

“Why, what *have* you been doing with that child’s head?”

“What did you say, ma’am?” answered the mother, hoping, I suppose, that she had mistaken the question. It was repeated. The mother looked very angry, and replied, “I haven’t been doing of nothing with it. I sup-

pose rich people's babies get bad heads, sometimes, as well as poor people's?"

Many in the room sympathized with her, as I plainly saw when I looked up from my account-book. It seemed as if an evil spirit had suddenly alighted among us and taken possession of us all; for every countenance looked more or less angry. Such is the wonderful power of a few words. When shall we ever duly estimate the omnipotence of words? As soon as I had finished my accounts, I rose from my seat, and went across the room to fetch something that I did *not* want; and, as I passed the offending head, I stroked the little pale face, and said,—

"Poor baby! how sad it is that it must begin to suffer so soon, and give its poor mother so many anxious nights and weary days!"

The baby smiled upon me; and by the time I was back to my seat I saw the mother's head bent over the child. The quiet tears were dropping upon its face, and the evil spirit was gone.

Now, this lady was by no means of an unkind disposition: she would have given us money if we had asked for it, and would have

exerted herself, far more than many, to render us any real service. She might truly have said,—

“And yet it was never in my soul  
To play so ill a part;  
But evil is wrought by want of thought  
As well as want of heart.”

The most beautiful and touching lessons on this subject are to be found in the life of our Saviour! Of course, a *word* or a *message* from him could have conveyed the miraculous healing power; but in most cases he chose to touch the sightless eye, to put his finger into the deaf ear, and to take her that was dead by the hand. Even the poor leper, whom no one would scarcely pass on the road,—who had “sat apart” for years, a stranger to all human sympathy,—what must that touch have been to him! Jesus knew that a double healing was required here, not only for the body covered with sores, but for the spirit wounded by long neglect and estrangement. Each must be healed, before the feelings of a man and a brother could return. A word or a message could have effected the first; but the touch accomplished both.

And yet how incomparably greater was the distinction that existed between Jesus and this poor man, than that which exists between the highest lady of the land and the poor cinder-picker at Paddington! We hear often about the condescension of the high towards the low; yet how it all fades away in the light of the life of Him "who, though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor"! We are commended sometimes for the few spare hours which we give to the poor; but what are these to His gifts who always "went about doing good," who sought not "to be ministered unto, but to minister," and who closed all by "giving his *life* a ransom for many"?

Haydon remarked about his pictures, "I was never satisfied with any thing I did, until I had forgotten what I wished to do." With the example of Christ before us at which to aim, it will surely be long before any of his followers will be able to say of *their* work that they are *satisfied*.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## LIGHT UPON A DARK SUBJECT.

"All may of thee partake:  
 Nothing can be so mean  
 Which, with his tincture (for thy sake),  
 Will not grow bright and clean.  
 A servant with this clause  
 Makes drudgery divine:  
 Who sweeps a room as for thy laws  
 Makes that and th' action fine."

GEORGE HERBERT.

"Now, all this kindness, sympathy and so forth, that you talk about, are very well in their way; but you surely find you cannot do every thing you wish among the poor by these means? What do you say to them about their dirty ways, their bad management, neglect of their children, and all that sort of thing?"

The answer to this question, put to me a short time ago, would occupy more space than could be spared in the limits of a small book. I will not, therefore, attempt more than a single illustration in reply.

One subject that comes under my notice very frequently is the inquiry for places of service for the daughters, sisters and friends of the higher class of women in our society. Many secrets of service have been confided to me, and I ought, therefore, to be wise; but the subject is difficult. It is painful to be constantly hearing from mistresses that there are scarcely any good servants to be met with; and from servants, "there is no good places going, or scarce any." Something must be wrong. That two classes so necessary to each other, and intended by the wise Disposer of all events to bless and benefit each other, should entertain such feelings of animosity and ill will, is deeply to be deplored. If there is any remedy for so great an evil, if any solution of so difficult a problem is possible, here, almost more than on any other subject, is there room for the whole energy of the philanthropist; here is one of the most direct roads that can offer, to the elevation of those who greatly need raising, and to the amelioration of our whole social system.

I think it must now be three or four years since several circumstances brought this matter more prominently before us. I said that



we would give up one evening to the special discussion of it. I appointed the next week, and invited the mothers to bring with them their own daughters and any young people they liked. The number that came showed that the subject was popular with them.

It was not difficult to find an appropriate Scripture lesson for the evening. The Old Testament abounds with interesting reference to servants. It is remarkable that the first-recorded appearance of an angel in this world was to a servant,—Hagar. Abraham's servant, Eliezer, was to him as his right hand. The character which we particularly dwelt upon was Rebecca's nurse, Deborah,—beginning at the first mention of her:—"And they sent away Rebecca their sister, and her nurse." We traced her probable life, as can easily be done from the history that is given us of the families in which she lived,—the long quiet years with Isaac and Rebecca alone, when she doubtless had her trials, arising, perhaps, from the want of perfect truthfulness in her mistress, or from the quiet, contemplative disposition of her master, who did not always appreciate her efforts to please. Then came two little boys to be nursed, who,

while they gratified her pride, gave her as much trouble as little boys of the present day. How often the nurse and mother conversed together about them as they grew up to be young men!—Deborah sometimes, with a heavy heart, not liking to tell the mother all that went on behind her back. Her earlier discovery of the vast difference in the dispositions of the brothers had already awakened in her mind a fear that trouble was in the distance. And when the trouble came,—when the little household, once so peaceful, was distracted by the contention of the brothers,—when the uncongenial daughters-in-law, who were a grief of mind to Isaac and Rebecca, were introduced into the family,—when her mistress discovered, too late, that whatever is purchased at the expense of truth brings only sorrow,—and when at last she had to witness the distress of her mistress in parting with her favourite son,—through all this how often must the kind assistance and sympathy of this faithful servant have been sought! How many tears shed by the poor mother in secret were wiped away by the hand of this unfailing friend!

After the last kind offices were performed for Rebecca, we find Deborah in Jacob's family,

living her old life over again in the care of his children, and winning love and respect even from Rebecca's lawless descendants. Is it any wonder if, after all this, a chosen spot, "under an oak," was selected as the place of her burial, and that the numerous family who attended her to the grave should have wept so much that the name of the place ever after was called "Allon-bachuth,"—the "oak of weeping"?

Now, how many times, through all these eventful years, difficult and trying circumstances must have occurred!—long illness, perhaps; quarrelsome children to contend with; great changes in the household management, and so forth. A modern servant would have said, many times over, "Well, I can't stand this. I must be off, and try for something easier." "If people will get into such messes, they must get out of them." "It is no business of mine: all I have to do is to take care of myself;" and off she would have gone. After repeating this many times, is it any wonder that, instead of finding a home in the house of a master's favourite son and being attended to her grave by a weeping family, she finds herself an outcast in the

world, and understands the true and bitter meaning of what in the heyday of her health and strength she used boastingly to sing,—

"I care for nobody, no, not I,  
And nobody cares for me?"

"But now, ma'am," said one of the women, "I don't think it's fair to speak of places as if they could be always stopped in. I have had my daughter ill at home for months. She was expected to be on her feet from seven o'clock in the morning till twelve at night, and only two hours out every other Sunday. She had to sleep in a room beside the kitchen, so that she never changed the air, hardly; and she got so ill that I am sometimes afraid she'll never get well again."

"And, ma'am," said another, "some mis-suses is so mean, they wouldn't like anybody like you to know; so that you might go to a house many times, and never find it out: but they stints the poor servants in their food and their rest, and seems to be always a-thinking how much they can get out of 'em and how little they can give 'em. I'm sure I know people about here that a'n't fit to take care of a dog."

Several others spoke to the same effect.

At last I said, "I should indeed be sorry if you supposed that I think it is entirely the fault of servants that we are doing so badly in this way at the present time. So far from it, I think mistresses are quite as much to blame as servants. But it would not be a wise thing for us to spend the little time we have together here in talking about what we cannot help.

"Mistresses tell me that it is the bad servants that put them out, and you tell me it is the bad mistresses that put you out. The sooner both parties begin to make some alteration, the better. But, as I am the only mistress here to-night, it is only waste of time talking about mistresses. And I want to ask you, first, if you do not think *you* have something in *your* power. Is there nothing *you* can do to make things better than they are now?"

No one answered: so I continued, "I will tell you about a servant I once knew very well. Her name was not Jane; but I will call her by that name now. From fourteen to sixteen, she was employed, under an upper-nurse, in taking care of some little children; but, as she wished to be a cook, her mother

found a place for her as kitchen-maid, where she was under a servant celebrated for her good cooking and bad temper. The only time Jane had for going out was Sunday afternoon, when she always went home to see her mother. For the first four weeks she brought home nothing but complaints of her place: it was so hard; the tyrannical cook was intolerable to live with; the kitchen was so hot, &c. With many tears and lamentations, she besought her mother to take her away from the place. The mother, after making careful inquiry, found that the cook was really a difficult and trying woman to live with, but that she was a good teacher, and that the toil of which Jane complained would in the end be the means of her getting a more thorough insight into her work. She ascertained, too, that Jane was never kept up at night; therefore she was not likely to suffer in health; and as to the hot kitchen, that was the more trying to Jane from her having previously been accustomed to be out-of-doors half the day with the children; but, as cooking is usually accomplished in a hot kitchen, the sooner she learned to bear that the better.

“One day, after all these inquiries had been

made, Jane came home, and, as usual, began her complaints. The mother stopped her, by saying,—

“I have been inquiring this week all about your place, and I find there are in it some things very uncomfortable and trying; but it is just the place where you can learn to be a good cook; and, whatever you may think of it, Jane, I mean you to stop there two years.’

“Oh, mother!’ said Jane, ‘how can you be so cruel?’ And she burst into tears.

“Jane,’ said her mother, ‘when the boys went out to work, you know how Jim used to complain about how he was teased in the carpenter’s shop, and how bad Harry’s hands used to get with the bricks. They used to come home awful tired in the evening; but I said to them, as you know, “Well, boys, it is no good to give in: we can’t have nothing in this world without trying for it. All this suffering and hard work will make men of you, and make you worth something. I don’t want my boys to be gingerbread people, that can’t do nothing and can’t bear nothing: you must just face about and meet your troubles, and it’ll sure be the making of ye by-and-by.” And so, Jane, now I say the very same to you. I

had to pay something for the boys' learning their trades, and to keep 'em too; but you are both paid and kept while you are learning your's; and so you must make up your mind to leave off grumbling; put your own shoulder to the wheel, and I say to you, as I did to them, it will be the making of you by-and-by.'

"Jane knew her mother always meant what she said, and after she had made up her mind it was no use arguing with her; and she went back to her place feeling that, whatever she might have to endure, all she could do was to make the best of it.

"At the end of the two years she left; but she was a good cook,—not hurt by her hard work, although I know well—for I have heard her speak of it many times—her work was very hard for the body and trying to the mind. She was immediately afterwards engaged by a family who lived near her old mistress, and had sixty dollars a year. After being there six years, through some changes in the household, she left; but she enjoyed the reputation of being the best cook in the neighbourhood, and was immediately offered a situation in a large establishment at wages of eighty dollars a year. Here she remained ten years, and then



married, having saved upwards of a thousand dollars; for, besides good wages, she had occasionally received presents from various members of the families in which she had lived, who valued her exceedingly and speak of her to this day with respect and affection. She was married from her mistress's house, where a wedding-breakfast was provided. When she went off with her husband, the whole family assembled to bid her farewell and express their good wishes; and one of the great boys did not forget to throw an old shoe after them, 'for luck,' as they foolishly said. The last time I saw her, she was in a most comfortably-furnished cottage, nursing her baby; and, among other things, she said to me,—

“The best thing that ever happened to me in my life was my mother saying to me, “Whatever you may think of it, Jane, I mean you to stay there two years.””

One of my party was a gipsy-girl, about thirteen years of age. She seemed to listen to this story with great interest; and, after I had ended, she exclaimed, without addressing herself to any one in particular,—

“I will learn to do something *well*: I am determined I will.”

"That is capital," I said: "it is just that resolution which is wanted. Every thing else is sure to follow.

"The best servant I ever had was entirely self-taught: she was the eldest of ten children, and spent her life, till she was fifteen, in 'holding the baby;' then she went to a house in our neighbourhood, as under-nurse, and to help the other servants when required. She was so obliging that she became a favourite with every one. The nurse taught her to read and sew; the young ladies taught her to write; the cook found her so handy that, after she had been in the nursery three years, she begged her mistress to allow her to have her in the kitchen. She came to me two years after that, able and willing to put her hand to any kind of work required. She remained with me six years, and then married a respectable carpenter. In the last letter which I received from her, she told me that her husband was earning twenty dollars a week by his trade, and she could earn five dollars a week by her dairy."

"But, ma'am," said one of the women, "don't you see, it wasn't *all* good management that made these people you tell us about

so prosperous? it was partly good luck: they got good places."

"Yes, I see that; but it was their good name that got them the good places, and their good behaviour that enabled them to keep them."

"Ah! I see," said another: "'course they wouldn't have stopped there if they hadn't been worth something."

"It is this '*being worth something*' that has a great deal to do with it, I assure you. Supposing I were to send for a carpenter and give him some wood and tell him to make me a box, and that in the evening, when I looked at his work, I found that he had made such mistakes in cutting it out and putting it together that it was all spoiled,—that there was no possibility of making a box out of it, and all that he had done for me was to make the material good for nothing. I should say to him, 'I cannot pay you for your work. You have deceived me in professing to be able to do what it seems you cannot do; you have injured me by destroying my property; and I cannot recommend you to any one else.' Now, who would call me unjust for this? And what would be thought of a master if, when he had

sent away one spoiled dish after another from his table, he were to send for the cook and say to her, 'I engaged to give you a home in my house and to pay you certain wages, on condition that you cooked my food nicely and took care of the property committed to your charge. I have fulfilled my part of the engagement; you have not fulfilled your's. If you really cannot cook properly, then you did me an injustice in taking my money and accepting the shelter of my house. Perhaps it only arises from carelessness. I will give you another trial; but I must be just to myself at the same time. I shall not pay you any wages for this day's work; you have not earned any; and your being paid for the future will depend upon whether you do what you engaged to do, or not.' Now, who could say this was unjust? And yet, I dare say, the self-styled cook would go back to the kitchen and say she had never heard of such a thing in her life.

"I do not remember ever employing a carpenter who could not do what I required of him,—not so well always, perhaps, as it might have been done, but still he did it. But how many cooks, housemaids and nurses have I seen entirely fail in their engagements! It

arose not from inferior capacity, but from the great mistake which the girls had made in supposing that they could perform the very important duties assigned to them in life without preparation. A boy who intends to be a carpenter begins, as early as he can, to observe how the work is done; he spends years in patiently learning one branch of his trade after another,\* before he asks for wages: consequently, he generally gives satisfaction to his employers, and often remains with one master for many years."

"But, ma'am," said one, "how are we to prepare our girls for service? Our houses and our ways is so different from gentlefolks'. I really don't know what we can do."

"I do not wonder at your saying this. I have often felt for you in this difficulty. I think your houses are not, perhaps, quite so much like gentlefolks' as they might be. A

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\* It would be well for our country, and the various mechanical handicrafts, if a "patient" apprenticeship were indispensable to their pursuit. As it is now, boys in their teens have the disposal of their own time and earnings, and are often indurated in extravagant and dissipated habits before the law regards them as capable of taking care of themselves.

person with good taste would prefer a clean cottage, any day, to a dirty palace. A bright, clean grate is just as much an ornament to your room as to a lady's drawing-room; and when you set your eldest girls to clean, if you were more particular about *how* they did it, many a good lesson might be given. But your principal hope is, I think, in this kind of apprenticeship of which I have spoken. Neither wages nor comfort, so long as the health is not endangered, should be the chief consideration in choosing a girl's first place. She should go from you with the impression on her mind that the future of her life depends very much upon herself; that what makes people valued is their being valuable; that wealth is not to be obtained by wishing for it, but by a long, determined course of patient continuance in well-doing, and a resolution not to be daunted by difficulties.

"A girl prepared for her work in this way would feel a self-reliance that would tend very much to keep her from letting herself down to any thing low. She would also be in a condition to make what is called 'her own terms' with her mistress. By this I do not mean to ask for high wages,—there is no fault to be

found with the amount of wages given at the present day,—but to ask for those privileges without which a servant cannot long continue to keep herself respectable. I will tell you what I think a girl who could faithfully perform her part of the contract would be justified in asking.

“1st. That she might have as much of the Sunday to herself as the general arrangements of the household would permit. The commandment which tells us all to ‘remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy’ has especially said that servants are to rest on that day. No one is likely long to go on right who has no time to read the Bible,—that great chart intended to guide us through life,—without time to attend the public means of grace, and without leisure to prepare for that world where the serving and the served must stand side by side to give up their account to the great Master and Judge of all.

“2d. She has a right to ask for the punctual payment of her wages on the appointed day.

“3d. She has a right to ask that some little portion of the day may be considered her own time. The precise time must depend upon the

habits of the family, and may require to be varied to meet extraordinary circumstances. *Some time there must be*, or a servant cannot do credit to her place by keeping herself neat and respectable. But the time should never be *stolen*: a mistress pays for time, and it is her right. There must be a distinct understanding between the parties; and I do not hesitate to say, from my own experience, that such an arrangement would be found mutually advantageous."

After the meeting was over, several little groups might be seen in various parts of the room, engaged in earnest conversation. I heard one of them say it was "a sight clearer to her than ever it had been before."

About two years after this conversation, a woman called at my house, one morning, bringing her two daughters with her, apparently about seventeen or eighteen years of age. I remembered she had formerly attended our meeting, but she had since removed from the immediate neighbourhood. After the first inquiries had passed, she said,—

"I don't know whether you remember, ma'am, about two years ago you talked to us at the mothers' meeting, one evening, all



about servants and missuses, and such like. I was there, and these two girls. We had been puzzling ourselves a deal, for some time before, to know what it was best to do; and we understood what you said, and liked it; and it seemed to make us see things better than we had ever done before. I had heard of some places for them; but we were afraid they would be overworked, and all that. As we were going home, the girls said they would try for it: they didn't want to be 'gingerbread people,' either. So they took heart, and went to work, and they have been hard at it ever since. They aren't very stout, you see, ma'am; for they've had plenty of work, and none too much to live upon. But she's a cook [pointing to the eldest], and I'll be bound no master'll ever send for her to say she's spoiled his dinner; and she's been in the nursery [pointing to the youngest], and has learned to do needlework well, as I can show you [producing a piece of work]. There, ma'am! aren't that something like it should be? She won't have to bargain for what she can't do; that's certain."

There stood these two girls, looking rather pale and worn, but by no means unhappy.

They were very plainly, though neatly, dressed; for no finery could have been afforded out of the small wages which they had received. There was dignity about them arising from a feeling of conscious worth, and a sense that they were not simply asking for employment as a favour: they were prepared honourably and truthfully to give back in labour the value of what they received in board and wages. The contract would be advantageous to both parties, proving that our wise and kind Father has allowed and designed all these distinctions for good,—that, by mutual dependence, we may be led to cherish those feelings of respect and regard for each other which are the strongest cement of society.

“For the body [of society] is not one member, but many.”

“And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee.”

“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

“And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.”



## CHAPTER IX.

## OUR MISSIONARIES.

"The poor are the poor's best friend."

"Little words of kindness,  
Little deeds of love,  
Make this world an Eden,  
Like to heaven above."

THOSE who have watched the mothers' society from the commencement will see that every year has been marked by steady progress; and not merely in numbers: the moral and spiritual tone has deepened, become more real, more earnest, more active. Nothing was so distressing to me, when I first commenced this work, as to observe the unkind feelings which these women manifested towards each other. It was no unusual thing for me to receive a call from one of them, for the purpose of telling me that if I allowed Mrs. So-and-So to come to the meeting, then

*she* should *not* come. "They hadn't spoke for months, and never meant to speak any more; and there was no pleasure in coming and seeing such a 'ippocrit' as she was 'sit-tin' up there.'" Then, again, I was warned not to take up with such a one; for she was as false as she was high, and "nobody never believed a word she said." Once a mother came to complain against her own daughter, telling me she was quite undeserving of the assistance I was rendering her, and that the only thing that brought her among us was to get all she could. I often spoke to them very earnestly about these accusations of each other, and assured them that this sin would be to our meetings what Achan's crime was to the camp of Israel; that we could neither expect the blessing of a God of love ourselves, nor hope that our united prayers for our children would be heard and answered, whilst we were hating instead of helping one another.

But this is not so much such a thing to be lectured against as to be lived down. The constant reading together of the word of God, especially of His life who so loved us (sinners though we are) as to die for us, soon had its

effect upon us. We have always, from the first, made a point of referring in our prayers to any particular family affliction which had occurred to any of our number, and also of sending kind messages to the absent; and, as I persisted in doing this to saints and sinners alike, and never took any further notice of the evil reports brought to me than to pray more earnestly than ever that we might *all* be delivered from the particular sins complained of, the evil seemed gradually to die out, and I hailed with joy many evidences of a very *different* spirit. The elder women began to remember that they could sometimes help the younger ones, by nursing their babies, so that the work for the many little ones at home might proceed the faster. The younger members, in their turn, would stop to thread the needle, which the failing sight of some companion made a difficult operation. The warmest seat by the fire was given up to the poor invalid who came with a bad cough, or to the newly-made mother with her "wee baby." The only two footstools in the room were given up to those who most needed them, instead of keeping them, with the remark, "I got it

fast, and I shall keep it," which at one time might have been heard.

One evening last winter I read to them about what a person was doing for her poor neighbours in St. Giles's. I saw they were extremely interested in the narrative, and I said to them, "Now, many of you, I know, feel to those about you as kindly as that person does; and if any of you think that you have time and strength and spirit for this work, I believe that, without giving up your whole days to it (as, with you, that would be impossible), you might, by a little planning and arrangement, accomplish a great deal of good." After the meeting was over, three of the women came to me, and offered their services in any way I thought best. As it was then too late to go into the subject, I invited them to tea on the following Wednesday.

The three came, bringing with them the fourth, the mother of several little children, who apologized much for coming, especially as she had to bring her baby with her. She knew she couldn't do much; but she couldn't bear to be left out. She thought she might take her baby and sit with a sick neighbour sometimes, or take care of some little children,

with her own, now and then, if that would do any good. Two of the women were upwards of fifty years of age, and had then no children living with them.

The other was one of those who attended our first meeting, and then told me that she thought, if we went on with the society, she might look in now and then upon us: not that she wanted to learn any thing; for "I 'spect," said she, "I know every thing better than anybody can tell me;" in fact, that *her* visits would be to give us her patronage. However, as we became better acquainted, we were soon good friends. She lost her husband a few months afterwards, and was left to struggle alone, with a family of boys, to whom she has done her duty, and they are truly rising up to call her blessed. With a very limited allowance from the parish, she managed, by washing and mangling, to earn enough to support them and send them all to school; but the work was too hard for her. After the first year or two, I began to observe that she walked uneasily, and that the expression of her countenance indicated constant suffering. I soon found that she was afflicted with an internal complaint, which I feared, at first, admitted of no remedy.



But, notwithstanding all she endured, she worked on, always saying she could bear any thing but the poor-house and separation from her children, and managed, in spite of such difficulties as would have sunk many a strong man's heart, to keep her little home to herself, and retain over her great boys an almost unbounded influence. She became so very ill last summer that I took her one day to "The Home,"—a kind of hospital for chronic diseases just established in our neighbourhood. The doctors spoke of the case, not only hopefully, but as one that could certainly be cured; but it must be by an operation; and it would be necessary for her to become an inmate of the hospital for four or five weeks. Under skilful and humane care, the cause of her suffering was entirely removed; and the gratitude of this poor woman for so great a mercy seemed unbounded. During the evening on which she and her companions came to my house, she said, "After I was sure I was going to be well again, I used to lie in my bed in that hospital there for hours, with my heart lifted up with gratitude to God; and I asked him so many times to show me what I should do for him for all his great love and kindness to me. I really

did feel that love and thankfulness to him, that I thought the first strength I had I *must* give to him; but I couldn't exactly see how. Last Monday was the first time, since then, I have been able to come to the meeting; and as you were reading about what was doing in St. Giles's, I says to myself, 'There, that's your sort of work;—that's what you're to do;' and I began to think how God had tried me, and how I had suffered in almost every way, and that he had helped me through every thing, and never left me; and I knew then that this was *his* way of teaching me and preparing me to help others. And now, ma'am," she went on to say, "you see, people is very kind to me; and my children's beginning to help me; and I sha'n't have quite so much hard work as I have had; and, though I can't do a great deal yet, I think I could give up *two* afternoons in the week for doing what I can for those who want help. And I have thought of what you have often told us, too, ma'am, that if we will but make a beginning in what is right—even if we don't see exactly how—that the way will open to us as we go along, and God will send the light as we want it. We don't none of us feel very wise about it at present; but

we are all ready to do, as far as we can, any thing you think best."

We spent a very pleasant evening together, and talked over various plans. The women were of varied capacities, and I saw that they were not all fitted for the same work; but they were all actuated by the same spirit,—love to their Saviour, and willingness to work for him.

At our next meeting, in the following week, just as I sat down to read, a little girl entered the room, and, coming up to me, said,—

"Please, ma'am, mother sent me here to ask you to pray for her."

"What is the matter with your mother?" I replied.

"She is very bad, ma'am, and hasn't got nobody to do nothing for her."

When the little girl was gone, I inquired if anybody knew this person (Mrs. S—), as she had only attended our meetings for a few times. Only one woman present knew any thing about her, and she not much.

"I only know," she said, "that she is a poor troubled thing, as has known better days, and likes to keep herself to herself, like; for her husband spends every thing in drink, and

never leaves her any thing to make herself decent with."

I said to them, "I feel sure this poor woman wants just the kind of help and sympathy that some of you know how to give. I leave her in your hands, and you can let me know if you want any help from me."

The next afternoon, one of these newly-appointed missionaries called on me. She said she had just come from Mrs. S——, and described her visit as follows:—

"I really could hardly help crying, ma'am, when I first went in, and saw what a state the poor thing was in. Her baby was born on Saturday afternoon; and because she was too poor to pay the midwife the whole sum due her, the woman did not return to her the next morning, as they commonly do, to wash and dress the baby; but there she had been left, without a creature going near to do any thing for her. She was too ill to do any thing for the baby herself; and there they and the other children had been crying for hours. I tried to speak cheerfully to her, and told her I would soon set it all to rights. So I made up her bed clean and comfortable, first, while the water was heating, and then I got a great

washing-pån and washed the poor miserable little baby in it, and put on it some clean things, which I found in the bag of baby-linen that had been lent her. The little thing had been crying for hours; but it soon felt comfortable, and went off to sleep before I had finished dressing it. I put it into bed with its mother, and then I got the Bible and read a few verses to her; and then I kneeled down and prayed with her as well as I could. I asked God to help her out of her trouble, and keep her from thinking hard thoughts of him, and make her to see he meant it for her good. Then I talked to her a good bit; and she told me how she had been well off once, but that her husband's drinking had ruined them all. She cried very much, poor thing! and said she had been praying all the morning that God would send some one to help her. I tried to comfort her as well as I could, and told her that we would all pray for her, and that God could change her husband's heart. Then I kissed her, and so I came away; and now, ma'am, I am come to you, if you please, for some food for them; for they all want that badly enough."

The next morning another of these self-

constituted missionaries went. She was not so gifted in many ways as the one who first called. She had fewer words at command, and her hands were stiff, having suffered from rheumatism, in consequence of which she found it impossible to dress the baby: so she went for the mother mentioned above, who wished to do something to help, and took care of her children while she was gone. After this she returned, carrying away every thing that wanted washing, and brought it all back clean in the evening. This she continued to do for three weeks: in fact, these three kind women took the entire charge of the poor sufferer, and watched over her till she was able to work again.

I shall not easily forget the evening when Mrs. S—— came among us again, bringing the new baby, as they usually do, to introduce to the meeting. The regular business had not commenced, and I was going about from one to the other, taking the money for the work. After congratulating her upon her recovery and welcoming the new baby, she passed on to a seat by the fire, that some of them were trying to make extraordinarily comfortable for her. I saw a little group

gathering round her, talking about the baby (we are rather in the habit of making a good deal of the last baby); and presently, as in the course of my work I passed near this group, I heard her say, "You have been just like kind sisters to me. It was the best day of my life when I came here; and I shall never forget how kind you have been to me."

"Oh, Mrs. S——," said a kind, cheerful woman, who had the good sense to see that the expression of strong feeling was too much for the poor, weak mother just then, "never you mind about that; it did us good to do it: and you must make haste and get well and strong, and then we shall come upon you to help us some day."

The sequel to this story is too pleasant to be omitted.

During the Christmas week, or as soon as possible afterwards, we invite the poor women of this society, with their husbands, to partake of a social cup of tea together. The nicely-lighted and prettily-decorated rooms presented last year a most cheerful appearance. About a hundred and fifty of these poor people assembled, with fifty or sixty of their richer neighbours.

That evening I saw, for the first time, the husband of Mrs. S——. They were sitting together, and she was nursing her baby; but they both looked uneasy. The drunkard and his family are so accustomed to "hide themselves away from view" that the bright light and numerous company made them feel how shabby they were. A few kind, encouraging words were at first necessary to reassure them and make them feel that they were welcome. Presently I had the pleasure of observing that they had become thoroughly interested in what was passing, and the clouds had cleared away from their countenances.

I do not think that any exhortation was given that night to drunkards especially: in fact, I believe that the subject was never once mentioned in any way. The platform was occupied by gentlemen of no common standing; and it is not matter of surprise that the words of earnest men should have conveyed to their audience something of the intense love and sympathy which pervaded their own hearts. It was an evening that many will long remember with pleasure; but to our poor friend (Mrs. S——) it was the beginning of a new



life. After the meeting was over, her husband said to her,—

“Wife, I am done for. I can never go back to those drinking ways again. I can stand up against a good deal; but those people there would have moved a post, let alone a man.”

This man was a fishmonger, and once had a business in this trade which he sold for fifteen hundred dollars. The greater part of this money was squandered in drink. Since then, the only means by which he could support himself and his family had been by hawking fish about the streets. For many hours, even of a Sunday morning, his loud voice might have been heard resounding through the streets and squares of the neighbourhood. Even the church-doors were not thick enough to shut out the noise; and the annoyance was often the subject of complaint.

I went to see them, one morning about the beginning of March, but not in the damp cellar where our acquaintance was first made. They had taken a neat little shop, and, though it was not well stocked, they were getting on.

The eldest girl, who was appointed to look after the shop, certainly looked as if she felt herself “a person of consequence.” I could

scarcely recognize in her the poor "crushed-out" thing whom I had seen working for the family in their former dark abode. The other children—who used to remind one of the plants which we shut up in our cellars in the winter, keeping them without nourishment or light, that they may not exhaust their powers in growing—were now gambolling about the shop, while the sun was shining on them so brightly that they had to shade their eyes with their hands as they looked up. The mother, though she had lost that look of abject distress, still seemed anxious.

"It is hard work, ma'am," she said, "to get right when things have been going wrong so long; but I hope, by God's blessing, we shall get out of trouble after a bit; for my husband keeps steady, thank God. The children go to school now. I don't think any thing in the world would make these two boys drink. They go errands sometimes for people, and have drink offered to them, but they will never touch it. I do pray every day that they may never know what it is to suffer and sin as we have done."

And so the poor mother, with the full consciousness before her of the cause of her own

blighted life, looks at her children, and with uplifted hands and streaming eyes prays,—as none but the wife of a drunkard ever prays,—“Deliver them, oh, deliver them from evil!” And the children, with the recollection ever before them of their joyless childhood and sorrowful home, band themselves together, trying thus by union to strengthen their moral courage to resist evil, and they pray, “Oh, lead us not into temptation.” Let us kneel with them and pray, too, that God, in mercy to these poor captives sighing for deliverance, will awaken the consciences of those who still dare to offer the intoxicating cup to such as easily yield to temptation. If they will not pause and listen to the groans of humanity and the wail of despair that are ascending night and day from every corner of this land through this accursed thing, let them, for their own sakes, ponder the meaning of the terrible words, too lightly passed over even by those who tell us that He who uttered them is their Lord and Master, “Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!” “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”

But to return to our missionaries. One of them spends the greater part of Monday morning in collecting money for the savings-bank. She has occasionally brought me as much as ten dollars in the evening, all obtained in small sums, even as low as a penny, and rarely higher than fifty cents. This poor woman suffers very much from a swollen foot and leg. I have said to her,—

“I am afraid you must find it very painful to walk and stand about so long.”

“Well, ma'am, 'tis rather,” she will say; “but it does me good: and I think how happy I shall be when I take it back to them in the winter, and they tell me it is all as if I had given it to them, for they haven't a-missed it.”

On Monday afternoon they bring me their report of what they have been doing during the week. I learn from them the general state of things, and what is actually transpiring, much better than I could from any investigation of my own making. The poor have no hope, in their dealings with one another, of getting at a “blind side,” as they sometimes do with a lady; and the positive facts which I obtain are of great use to me

in many ways, and have often saved me from making mistakes.

In order to keep up a vigorous and lively interest at the "mothers' meetings," the subjects that are brought forward must usually have some reference to what is passing among them. I have frequently, at home, thought of a topic to form the basis of our conversation in the evening; and on my way there, or even after I have entered the room, I have heard of events which I knew must so absorb their attention that there could be little chance of their following out my train of thought, and that if I wished to do them good I must follow their's instead.

I once heard our city missionary make a remark, which has been very useful to me. He said,—

"We must remember, in our intercourse with the poor, that they have a constant pressure upon their minds as to how they are to provide for their ever-returning wants; and we must not expect more abstract attention from them than we feel we should be inclined to give to ourselves supposing that we were so situated as not to know, certainly, how the dinner for to-morrow was to be provided."

I have thought that our interviews may be compared to meeting men on a battle-field. How absurd it would be to call them aside and endeavour to fix their attention on some of the abstruse metaphysical questions of the day! "Oh," they would say, "pray do not trifle with us. We are ready to sink under the heat and burden of this protracted fight! Talk to us of that, and how we are to gain a victory; and tell us, oh, tell us, is there any hope of peace at last?"

None, I believe, feel more emphatically that life is a battle than the poor mother, with her many children and few helps. The demands made on her strength, patience and resources are beyond what those in easier circumstances can conceive. I have felt ashamed, sometimes, after speaking of the virtues of patience and forbearance, to think how utterly I might fail in all these, were I tried as they are tried.

I once persuaded a poor man to attend a place of worship. He went; and the next time I saw him I asked him how he liked it.

"Well, ma'am," he said, "I dare say it was all very good, if anybody could have understood it. I thought I should have got on a bit with the prayer; but there were such a

lot of hard words in it I couldn't make nothing of it. Parsons don't understand nothing about us, or, instead of praying for all them outlandish things, they'd pray a bit for us, now and then, and for our poor wives at home, that can't never get out to pray for themselves, and got work to do that would frighten 'em to look at."

This remark will show the estimation in which the very poor generally hold the services in our churches and chapels. It would be unwise to argue from it that some great alteration must be necessary,—that the language and thoughts of every preacher should be so simplified as to be brought to the level of the uneducated. There would be a want of justice in this. The higher classes have a right to be considered, as well as the poorer; their tastes and requirements must be thought of and provided for; and, as they are satisfied, edified and instructed by things as they are, for themselves, let things remain as they are. What we want is something in *addition* to that which we already have, and, we think, something very different.

The college education received by our ministers of religion would not be the best possible

preparation for our Ragged-School Teachers and City Missionaries. The clearness imparted to the intellect by mathematical studies, the extensive knowledge of words derived from the acquirement of many languages,—in fact, the general discipline through which the mind of the student passes,—give him a mental power which sets him at an immeasurable distance from the man who does all his counting upon his fingers, and whose only knowledge of language is derived from what he has picked up in the streets.

Our City Missionaries are doing what they can to supply this want. The hired room where they sit, surrounded by the unwashed and uncombed, picturing out to them a passage of Scripture, applying its lessons to their daily life, and then praying to Him who can bless their daily toil and give them daily strength,—these are the services appreciated by the "sons of toil;" and we thank God for having raised up these simple, earnest teachers.

It is the deep conviction which I hold that the poor can be best helped, as well as taught, by those who thoroughly understand them, that has induced me to hail with delight the



introduction upon the field of labour of the Female Missionary. A sensible, true-hearted Christian woman, very little removed above the poor herself, will accomplish much more among them than any lady, however well inclined she may be. So many minutiae must be considered in endeavouring to improve the home-habits of these people, such a constant watchfulness is necessary to prevent a degeneration into merely amateur work, that it requires all the method, skill and determination of the professional hand.

There are modes of argument which the poor know how to use with the poor, which would never occur to people differently situated. A few weeks ago, I requested one of our missionaries to call upon a family where there were a number of children growing up in great ignorance, and to see if she could not persuade the mother to send some of them to school. Next time I saw her, I asked her what success she had had.

"At first, ma'am," she said, "I couldn't get on at all: the mother did not seem to care about the children's knowing any thing, and she said she was sure she could not afford the

school-money.\* I told her I found it was always a saving in the end; for their shoes didn't get worn out so fast, nor their clothes torn, and I hadn't a-near so much washing to do for 'em, as if they did run in the streets. I told her it often cost me more in the holidays for mending their shoes than as though I had paid the school-money. She took up with this directly, and said, if that was it, she'd send the most rickety of 'em; and if it answered, she'd send the rest after a bit."

Now, it is just possible that it might have occurred to a lady to use this same kind of argument; but it would have lost its force with the mother, because she would have known it was not the result of actual experience.

We hope, if spared to another winter, and if we are fortunate enough to obtain the requisite funds, that we shall be able to establish a paid missionary in the Potteries. Great as the improvement has been, much still remains to be effected. This poor place, that was left so many years *literally* wallowing in the mire, is still much behindhand in cleanliness and

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\* No *excess* of this kind can be made in any part of the United States, where free education is carried to every man's door.

home comfort. The keen eye, the ready hand and the loving heart of some good Christian woman, who can devote the whole of her time to the work, is just what we want. We must trust in Him who has already done so much for us, that he will open the way as we go on, and raise up for us, in our time of need, both the person and the pay.

## CHAPTER X.

## OUR BABY.

"The cup of life first with her lips she prest,  
Found the taste bitter, and declined the rest;  
Averse, then turning from the face of day,  
She softly sigh'd her little soul away."

I MENTIONED in the last chapter that I had often seen the necessity of deferring a subject previously prepared for the evening of our meeting, and adopting, in its stead, a topic more appropriate to passing events. As I consider this point of much importance, I am glad that my journal can furnish an illustration.

One evening in the year 1854, as we were putting aside our work, one of the women reminded me that the day of our next meeting would be a fast-day; and she asked if we were to assemble as usual. I replied that as that day would be set aside for a special purpose, and one in which we were all deeply interested,

I thought it would be better for us to make a point of all attending some place of worship, and uniting with others in our prayers for the deliverance of our country from the great evils which threatened it.

Two or three voices exclaimed, at once, "Then, if that is it, we sha'n't go nowhere."

"Why not?" I asked.

One of them replied, "My master never lets me go to any place. We have neither of us ever been inside a church since we were married."

Two or three of the others said that was just the case with them.

"How is it, then, that your husbands let you come here?"

"Why, ma'am, we goes on with our work here; and it helps us to get many a nice bit of clothes, that we should have to go without if we didn't get them here, by paying a little at a time; and the children, too, you see, ma'am, is mostly in bed before we come."

"Do you not think that some of you could persuade your husbands to go to church with you, for once?"

They shook their heads, and said they were afraid not. There were a few in the room

who said they would go if they could. I told them, if they would express to me what their wishes were, I would adopt any plan they liked best. With the exception of about six or eight, they said they would rather the meetings were continued as usual.

"If that is the case," I replied, "I will be here at the usual time next week, to meet any of you who cannot make it convenient to attend any place of worship; but, remember, we must have no work done. I should not think that right on such a day."

When I entered the room on the following week, I found thirty of the poor mothers assembled. We sat and chatted together for about a quarter of an hour; for we felt, on that occasion, that we were not bound to observe our rules with our usual strictness. I intended to read about our Saviour's entrance into Jerusalem, and to dwell particularly on the tears he shed in the prospect of the destruction of that city, showing from this how unwillingly God allowed his judgments to descend upon a nation, and that "he would rather they would turn from their wickedness and live." I had just begun to read, when the door opened, and a woman, passing hastily

up the room, took her seat on a low box by the side of the fire. She leaned forward, resting her head on her arms, and began to weep bitterly. I looked up for an explanation. One of the women said, "She lost her baby, ma'am, a day or two ago, and she takes on terribly about it." We all sat silently for some minutes, for we felt the sacredness of the presence of grief. They were precious minutes to me, full of earnest thought and feeling.

About ten months previous to the time of which I am speaking, this woman first came among us, bringing her baby, then about six weeks old. I thought I had scarcely ever seen so sweet a child. The expression of the little face reminded me of something holier and purer than is usually to be met with in this fallen world; and I did not wonder that it was said, "Of *such* is the kingdom of heaven." I knew both the father and the mother. The father was a genius of no common order, and, but for the fatal habit of drinking, would have risen in the world. The mother had known better days, but, not having much spirit, she had too easily resigned herself to her fate, and scarcely exerted herself as much as she

might have done to avert the evils that surrounded her: consequently, their home was an unhappy one.

On the first evening of the introduction of these little ones, we are in the habit of commending them in prayer to the especial care and protection of our heavenly Father. I am afraid the prayer that night was not mixed with faith as it ought to have been. I remember thinking of the home in which this child was to be trained, and of all the evil influences to which he must be exposed; and I wondered *how* he was to be "led straight through this world of sin, and get to heaven at last." I thought of him "tossed on the tumultuous sea of human passions and temptations, without any strong, kind hand to guide the helm;" and I could have wept, as I prayed that he might be shielded from life's bitter trials and temptations.

"I long'd for that happy and glorious time,  
The fairest and brightest and best,  
When the dear little children of every clime  
Shall come to his arms and be blest."

I could not sleep that night without again committing this sweet child in prayer to Him who "carries the lambs in his bosom."



This mother and baby were so constant in their attendance that we should have suspected something wrong if they had not made their appearance. As the baby grew, he became still more lovely. He smiled sweetly when he was noticed, and we all loved him so much that he was universally called "*our* baby." I occasionally took him on my lap when I was reading, that the mother might get on the faster with her work. He used to sit quietly, making playthings of my fingers, or looking intently into my face, that he might be ready with his sweet smile when he was noticed.

And it was for the loss of "*our* baby" that the poor mother's tears were flowing so fast. No wonder that many hearts there sympathized in her grief; and thoughts, too deep for words, kept us silent. The mother was the first to speak. She said,—

"Ma'am, do you remember the first evening I brought him here? You looked at him so, and said he was a pictur' child."

"Yes; I was just thinking of it."

"We liked that name for him so much, it made his father think more of him: he would watch him asleep in the cradle, and say,

'Well, that is a pictur' child, if ever there was one.' I never had nothing so good belonging to me before, and I never shall again."

"Do you remember a little while ago," I remarked, in reply, "when the weather was so cold, telling me you feared the baby suffered for want of warmer clothes than you were able to procure for him, and that the coarse food, which was all you could get, did not agree with him?"

"Yes, I mind: he made me feel how bad it was to be poor. I never cared about it so much before."

"Supposing I had promised to take the baby into my house, and surround him with every comfort, and care for him as for one of my own children: would you have given him up to me?"

"Why—yes—I think I should, if I could have seen him very often; for nothing troubled me so much as to see him suffer."

"If I had taken him, you would still have had to see him suffer; for, though I might have made him more comfortable than you could, I could not have shielded him from the attacks of disease and death. But he is gone now to a home where he will never suffer any

more! The kind hand of his heavenly Father has wiped away the tears that distressed you so much. As the Scotch song says,—

“ ‘There’s nae sorrow there, Jean;  
 There’s neither cauld nor care, Jean;  
 The day is aye fair, Jean,  
 In the land o’ the leal.’ ”

As soon as the mother could speak again for her tears, she said,—

“ Do you think, ma’am, he is gone there *for certain*? ’cause some of ’em have been saying to-day that nobody goes to heaven, not even babes, except they be ’lected.”

“ But when Jesus died upon the cross, it was that infants might be saved. Hear his blessed words:—‘ Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.’ No one has so much cause to love the Saviour as the mothers of little children.

“ By the death of Christ the way is opened by which the chief of sinners may be saved. We have all sinned: even our little babes have no holiness, till the Spirit of God makes them holy. The same Spirit must make us holy; and God is more willing to give that

Spirit to us than you or I are to give good things to our children. Think of that. We need not trouble ourselves about the 'lected,' as you call them, while we have from the mouth of God himself the words, 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' When you go home, I should like to have you take your Bible and read the account of our Saviour's crucifixion; and, as you are reading, just think, 'Now, all this suffering was to save *my baby*, among many others.' God has told us that he is *satisfied* with the sacrifice which has been made for sin: therefore, of course, there can be nothing else wanted but that we shall repent, and believe in Christ as the Saviour of sinners. And just think of this for a moment:—God has given up *his dearly beloved Son to suffer for us*, that we may give him back our children to be *happy forever*."

"Oh, ma'am, I am so happy to hear about it! You have made it clearer to my mind than it ever was before."

"I want to make it clear to you, also, that this Saviour, of whom we are speaking, must be *your Saviour*, as well as the Saviour of your child; for there is none other name

given among men whereby any of us can be saved."

"But, ma'am, you don't mean that Christ's dying has made it certain that we shall all get to heaven?"

"Christ died for the sins of the world, and the sacrifice is sufficient in itself to make all safe for heaven; but there are many who do not and will not accept this salvation. Supposing, now while provisions are so high, I were to send to every man, woman and child in the Potteries, and say that every day at one o'clock I would have a good dinner provided for them at my house: I would take care that there should be room and abundance *for all*. It is said there are a thousand inhabitants in the Potteries. Supposing, out of the number, only two hundred came. Some might be too proud to accept my kindness; others, too busy in seeking food in other ways. But the most extraordinary thing of all would be that some should have forgotten all about it. They would go on eating the most miserable food, suffering in every way in consequence, and grumbling at their unhappy fate; while, if they would only come to me, I would receive them and give them abun-

dance of the best. Complaints might still reach my ears, how greatly the people were suffering; but I should say, 'I really cannot help it. I have done all I can to prevent it. It grieves me very much to see so many vacant places at my table,—to see bread enough and to *spare*, whilst they perish with hunger. I wish they would come to me, instead of suffering as they do.' Now, this is just how it stands between us and God. He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. It is not the will of our Father who is in heaven that any should perish. He has provided, by the death of Christ, for the salvation of every one; and none that come unto him will he cast out. But we must *come*. Just as certainly as those poor people would lose the benefit of my dinner if they did not come, so shall we lose the benefit of the great salvation provided, if we do not come."

We concluded the evening by reading of the little children who were brought to Jesus; and then, in united prayer, we commended the sorrowing mother to Him who came to comfort Martha and Mary concerning their brother. We thanked him for the loan, though so short,

of this sweet and lovely child, whose mission on earth seemed to have been to awaken in its mother a purer and holier nature. And we thanked him, too, that "ere sin could blight, or sorrow fade," the Good Shepherd, who had laid down his life for this lamb of the flock, had resumed the care of this precious one, had spared him the contest of life, and taken him to himself, to be safe and happy forever.

I always feel tempted, when reviewing my journal, to linger over the narrative of the "fast-day evening." I recall how we sat and talked till the daylight had faded into twilight, and then we watched the fire as its flickering blaze occasionally rested on the placid face of some infant sleeping on its mother's lap. I recall, as if it were but yesterday, the earnest and fixed attention with which this company of mothers listened to the glad tidings of a Saviour for their little ones. Had he been presented to us as *our* Saviour only, we must have loved him; but how much more when we realize that, at such infinite cost, he has stretched forth his hand to save those dearer to us than life!

Some of the women that were there still speak of this evening with pleasure; and there

was joy in the presence of the angels of God, that night, over more than one sinner that repented.

I have occasionally taken much pains to make the *doctrines* of religion somewhat clear to them. It might not in every case be so necessary; but in this neighbourhood, where the enemy is more than usually busy in "sowing tares," it is of great importance that they should be enabled to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

The vicinity of Notting Hill has, unfortunately, been selected by the Papists as the scene of their most active operations. Whilst I write, I hear from my open window the sound of "busy workmen" employed on the rising walls of a nunnery of great size and importance. They have just purchased a piece of land in Pottery Lane, once the celebrated Cut-throat Lane, on which they intend building school-rooms. Only a few days ago, I was told that a poor woman had called, seeking relief. On finding she was a stranger to me, and being already overdone with similar cases, I sent a message by the servant that I was truly sorry for her, but it was not then in my power to attend to her case. Her reply to



the servant was, " Ah ! the Catholics is coming among us, and they'll never stand by and see us poor people suffer, like you Protestants do."\*

Whatever distinctions may prevail in the various denominations of Protestants, we surely all agree in this, that we are looking for salvation simply and entirely through the merits of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Compared with *this*, the points on which we differ are few and unimportant, affecting principally what we may call our outside life, —belonging to the " wood, hay, stubble" that attaches to the present imperfect state of things, and which, if not at last burned with fire, will at least be lost sight of when, instead of seeing through a glass darkly, the mind grasps the astonishing and overwhelming meaning of being *saved to the uttermost*.

A voice from the enemy's camp has reached us, that their great hopes of success rest upon the disunion among the ranks of Protestants. God grant that these hopes may be disappointed ! In times of national calamity, when

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\* A reference to any authentic statistics of our Relief Societies will soon show from what quarters sympathy and aid are supplied to the poor and suffering.

homes and hearths are threatened by the invasion of a foreign foe, the people are exhorted to let no private consideration, no respect for individual property,—*nothing*, in fact,—prevent their rising as with the heart of one man, to fight manfully for the defence of their homes and their country. Let us, it would be said, only expel this common foe, and mere personal matters can be arranged afterwards.

And now that the foe is bearing down with such a threatening aspect upon the interests of our Master's kingdom, is it still to be said, "The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light"? Is it too much to expect that we should work for Him who *died* for us?

## CHAPTER XI.

## LETTERS.

“Speak kindly, speak kindly: ye know not the power  
Of a soft and gentle word,  
As its tones, in a sad and troubled hour,  
By the weary heart are heard.  
Ye know not how often it comes to bless  
The stranger amid his weariness,—  
How many a blessing is round thee thrown  
By the magic spell of a soft low tone.  
Speak kindly, then, kindly: there’s nothing lost  
By gentle words—to the heart and ear  
Of the sad and lonely they’re dear, how dear!  
And they nothing cost.”

WEBSTER.

HOWEVER desirous may be the presiding officer of a mothers’ society to be constantly at her post, it must be obvious to all that occasional absence cannot be avoided. No assumed duties, however important, must for a moment supersede the first claims of home and kindred. Some have thought that the one must necessarily interfere with the other;

and, consequently, both ought not to be attempted; but experience proves that the faculties, from daily use, become rather brightened than worn, and can accomplish more than when merely called up on especial occasions. The "much" will be intrusted to those who are faithful in that which is "least," and not to those who stand all the day idle. The Master for whom we work does not employ us as the Egyptians did the Israelites, demanding the tale of bricks, and yet saying, "Let them go and gather straw for themselves."

We acknowledge the hand of God perhaps less in the supply of our mental than in either our temporal or spiritual wants; and this often makes us unwilling to attempt work to which, in the prospect, we feel ourselves unequal. Who does not know the fear and trembling with which new undertakings are usually commenced? Like Mary going to the sepulchre, we think only of the stone at the entrance, and say, "Who shall roll it away?"

I once heard a lady say that, to accommodate a friend, she had promised to undertake the management of a Bible-class for a few weeks; but, as the time for its commencement drew on, she found herself so completely un-

nerved by her anxious fears and distrust of herself that she was obliged to send a message to say she could not possibly meet the class. She has since learned a different kind of preparation; and, were she again placed in similar circumstances, she would go, as we all must, like Solomon, to the fountain of wisdom, and say, "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. Give, therefore, thy servant an understanding heart."

It is not necessary to have entire confidence in ourselves before we begin an important work, especially work through which we hope to influence others; but the poor mind, conscious of innumerable weaknesses and defects, must stay itself somewhere: it cannot carry its burden alone without fainting under the load. Our heavenly Father knows this, and says to us, "Do not try to carry it. Cast thy burden upon me: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." How well that it should be so! This at once places both us and our work in the right position:—Glorify me, not yourselves. We do not think of the tool that has chiselled out the beautiful sculpture, but of the hand that has wielded and directed that instrument.

I remember, one evening, when entering the room where our meeting was held, feeling immediately conscious that something not quite pleasant was going on there. One of our members, a fine tall woman, was standing at the work-table, with her great baby, about six months old, in her arms. She was speaking in a loud, angry tone, and as I approached the table I heard her say, "It's of no use: it'll never fit my baby; and so I tell ye I sha'n't have it." The lady who that evening kindly superintended the cutting-out of the work appealed to me, and said that the dimensions of the article had really been carefully attended to, and were the same in every respect as those generally received by the mothers with great satisfaction. I saw directly that this case differed from most contests, where both parties are usually wrong, for here both were right: the uncommon size of the baby accounted for it all. So, turning to it, I said, "Ah! baby, I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself to be so big, and thus to cause such a disturbance here. There's no getting any thing to fit you." Then I said to the mother, "You should have observed that this article you have rejected is the usual size; but if you will let your baby

be as big at six months as he ought to be at twelve, you must just take the consequences. I will give you some material that you must cut out for yourself, and try to fit your great boy if you can." The baby crowed and laughed, and seemed delighted at being such an object of attention. The mother caught the infection, and laughed too, acknowledged her mistake, apologized to the lady, and walked off to her seat, by no means displeased at being convicted of having one of the finest babies in the world.

A friend of mine happened to be there that evening who was wishing to establish a similar society in her own neighbourhood, and had come to look in upon us. As we were walking home together, she said, "I see how it is you are so successful: you have so much tact. I wonder how you can meet all these cases as they turn up." I replied, "I should wonder very much if I could not. I never go there without asking direction from Him who is 'the giver of every good and perfect gift;' and He who has said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' simply keeps his promise, and gives me the wisdom I ask for. Whatever difficulties arise, I remember that the Lord God of Elijah,

of Solomon and of David is my God, and he is as willing to make me wise to govern a mothers' society as he was to make them wise to govern kingdoms."

In stepping aside for an instant just to show that with this help, within the reach of all, we may become wise enough to do something for our poor neighbours and yet in no way be unmindful of our domestic claims, I have wandered away from my starting-point, which referred to the necessity of occasional absence from home.

The influence I have obtained over some of these poor people, and the respect and affection with which they have so abundantly rewarded any little kindness they may have received, I regard in the light of a sacred trust for which I am accountable, and which I am under no circumstances at liberty to set on one side and treat as though it did not exist. During these seasons of absence, therefore, by way of keeping up my acquaintance, I frequently address to some of them little friendly notes, generally expressing an interest in some passing event with which they may be connected, or, perhaps, simply a few words of sympathy to some poor sufferer "stricken of



God and afflicted." The poor are quite aware that this is a kind of attention that one lady might show to another, and there are few things they appreciate so highly. A note that it has perhaps taken scarcely ten minutes to write, and whose only cost has been the paper, envelope and stamp, has won many a heart, and cleared the way for further improvement.

But it will be obvious that, in a society numbering now ninety members, it is not possible to give this individual attention to all. That none may feel themselves forgotten and neglected, I usually send one letter addressed to all the members. The two following have been selected as referring to subjects of general interest

*Copy of a Letter addressed to the Members of the  
Mothers' Society during a few weeks'  
absence from home.*

"April 16.

"MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

"It gives me much pleasure to have this opportunity of continuing my intercourse with you. I should have written to you earlier, if I had not been so very much occupied in various ways.

"There are few days in which I do not think of you, and on this day especially [Wednesday, the usual day of our meeting] I never forget to spend part of the evening in earnest prayer to God, that he would bless you and make you great blessings to all with whom you are connected. I feel that your influence is so great, either for good or evil, that, in blessing and teaching you, God will be bestowing a rich blessing upon very many others.

"We have so often spoken together on the importance of our influence over our children, that I do not just now intend dwelling upon that. There is another view of this subject which has often been present to my mind of late, and I should like to try to interest you in it: I mean, the influence for good which God designs our children should have over us.

"During the time I resided in Bath, I met with a circumstance which much impressed my mind with this view of the subject; and I was glad, on looking into my desk the other day, to find I had kept an account of it, as I am thus able to give it to you more correctly.

"I think I have told you I used to manage a Female Friendly Society in Bath,—that is, a society where a number of poor women pay

in so much a week, to have out a certain sum when they are ill. The rule was, that when they required this money they sent me a certificate, signed by a doctor, stating that they were ill; and, as long as the illness continued, they sent to me every week for the money, each time producing the certificate. We used to meet once a fortnight, to pay in money, settle accounts, &c. At one of these meetings I said to a young woman,—

“‘I see, Esther, you have had money from this society four weeks.’ She said,—

“‘Not four, ma’am: only three.’

“I looked carefully over my accounts, and found that money had really been paid to her name for four weeks. After much inquiry and investigation, we found that Esther’s mother, a wicked and abandoned woman, had, by some means, obtained the certificate, presented it, and had appropriated the money to her own purposes. As soon as this was ascertained, I declared my intention of calling upon the woman and talking to her about it. All of them who knew her tried to dissuade me from this, assuring me that she was such a dreadful character that I should hardly be safe from personal violence. However, as such a

thing could not be allowed to pass unnoticed, I felt it was right to go; and, after earnest prayer to God for a wise and understanding heart, I set out.

"It was with much difficulty I found her out. She lived in one of those deplorable places to be met with in all great cities, where the workers of iniquity seek to hide themselves. At last I was directed to a little room at the back of a very dirty old-iron shop. On entering, I saw a very large woman standing in the room, her arms resting on her hips, her red face and bloodshot eyes telling her own sad tale. She did not speak, but stared at me with the bold look of defiance. I said,—

"I think your name is Alice R——?"

"She replied, 'I should like to know what the likes of you has to do with the likes of me?'

"I said, 'You have a daughter, I believe, named Esther?'

"'I wonder what business that is of your's,' she rejoined, with a terrible oath, and clenching her fist.

"I said, 'Just now, that is business of mine.' Then, taking a seat, dirty as it was, by way of assuring her I was not going to be fright-

ened from her presence, I looked steadily at her, and said, quietly, 'Alice, if you had trusted me with your money to keep for a certain purpose, and when you applied to me for it you found it had been used by others, in ways never intended, what would you say to me?'

"'Why, say you ought to look sharper after it, to be sure,' she replied.

"I then explained what was the object of my coming to her. She did not attempt to deny what she had done, but said it was very well 'for the likes of me, who never know'd the want of any thing, to come and preach to poor folks 'bout honesty.' But still, though she kept up this kind of bravado, I saw that, as we talked on, she softened a little. I looked round the dark, dirty room, and said,—

"'Alice, this room is very dark, and perhaps you think what passes in it is little noticed; but indeed there is a day coming when every thing that has been done or said, or even thought, here, will be brought to light, and you will have to give an account to God for it all.'

"She clasped her hands together, and said,—

"'Then that will be a dreadful day to me. I was brung up 'mong curses and blows; and

I gives curses and blows. You may think it is quiet enough here now, may-be; but come by-and-by, and you will see what you never saw before. Why, ma'am, I don't think no more of knocking a man down than I does of knocking that 'ere candlestick off the table; and, as she suited 'the action to the word,' and raised her powerful arm, I could well believe this to be true. I said,—

“But surely you did not bring up your child in such a place as this? For I remembered that Esther was gentle and modest,—the very reverse of her mother.

“No, indeed I didn't,” she replied. “When she was too little to leave me, I kept her out of the way as much as I could; and when she got older, I spent every penny to pay *them* for taking care of her as knew the way to do it; and now I never lets her come here,—though I often goes to see after her.”

“But why,” I said, “did you not, for her sake, try to alter your home? Why did you not then give up your wicked companions and bring her up yourself in a way you knew to be right?”

“Ah!” she replied, “you are a lady, and don't know nothing about such people as me.

I have heard *God* is powerful, but I know the *devil* is; and we wicked people can't get away from one another as you think we can.' I said,—

“‘Just now, when you were telling me about your early life, I was thinking you scarcely seemed to have had a chance of being better than you are; but I see now that God has not forgotten you. That little child was sent to awaken the voice of conscience and love in you; and, if you had only listened to it, you might have saved yourself as well as your child.’

“As we talked in this way, she wept very much, but said that it was all now too late,—that God was her enemy, and there was no mercy for her. I said,—

“‘Alice, you keep this window so dirty that the light can scarcely enter; and you never seem to open it, so that the air of this room is almost enough to kill you. But, for all that, there *is* bright sunshine and there *is* pure air, if you would only let them come in; and God intended them for you as much as for me. And in the same way you surround yourself with what is wicked, and must of course

produce misery, and then you complain that God has no mercy upon you!

"I asked her if she had ever heard of Jesus, who was so sorry for the misery of such unhappy persons as herself that he came into the world on purpose to die for them and to save them. She said she had; but she knew he did not mean her. When I rose to go, she said,—

"'It seems to me that your's must be the first kind voice I have ever heard; but I shall never hear it again,—no, never; for you must not come here,—indeed you mustn't: this is no place for the likes of you.'

"'Then why,' I said, 'do you not determine to get such a home for yourself as I could come to?' But she shook her head, and said,—

"'Ah! you don't know nothing;' and so we parted.

"I dare say the thought will strike you, as it did me, when I was afterwards thinking over what had passed between us, what a wonderful influence for good this little child was intended to have over the poor mother! It seemed to awaken in her a better nature than she had ever known before; it was, as the



Bible expresses it, her 'day of visitation;' and if she had only permitted herself to come entirely under its influence, she might have been saved for both time and eternity. In her earnest endeavours to instruct her child in what was true and right, she would have found it out for herself, and, instead of being the poor fallen creature I found her, she might have become a useful and valuable member of society.

"God has wisely and kindly implanted in our minds such a feeling towards our children that we value and strive to obtain what is good, more for their sake than for our own. And we should feel thankful for this; for *whatever* makes us hate sin and love holiness is a great blessing.

"If we, my dear friends, truly and faithfully do our duty to our children, we shall have no time for bad company, bad books, idle gossip, or any other of those many temptations which 'Satan finds for idle hands to do.'

"Let us be thankful, then, for an honourable and useful occupation; and let it cheer us in the midst of employment, though sometimes wearisome and painful, to think that by

exercising a right and holy influence over our children we may be preparing them for usefulness on earth and an eternity of happiness hereafter.

"I know that some of you have to experience great suffering,—that the toil of your lives is very hard. I know of nothing that can tend so much to reconcile you to all this as to remember that, whatever your lot may be, it is of God's appointment, that he has wise ends to answer by it, and in another world, if not in this, you will know that the course you have had to take was the best for you.

"There is much that is dark and mysterious in the present state of things: it is useless to attempt to explain it away, neither do I think we are called upon to do so. The only state of mind suitable to our present condition is entire submission to the will and appointment of our heavenly Father. We must *trust* now; we shall *know* hereafter.

"When we are tempted by the trials of our lot to think hard thoughts of Him who has appointed it, let us remember, 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us

all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?'

"I have written this amidst many interruptions; but I know you will believe me when I say I have earnestly desired to say something to comfort and strengthen you for your daily trials. May God bless you, my dear friends; may we have many more pleasant meetings here; and, when the battle of life is over, may we all meet in that world where sin and sorrow can never enter.

"I am

"Your sincere friend."

*Copy of a Letter written during an absence of some months  
in consequence of illness.*

"BATH, November 6.

"MY DEAR FRIENDS:—

"I am truly sorry to be obliged to be absent from you so long. It has always given me much pleasure to meet you at our weekly meetings, and I now miss them very much. I shall be indeed thankful when it pleases God to restore me to health and enable me to resume my usual place among you.

"I have thought much and often, during

my long illness, how entirely we are dependent upon God for every power we possess, both of mind and body. We can work only by his permission. In a moment, if he sees fit, he can withdraw from us all our powers; and we are perfectly helpless until it pleases him to restore them to us. To those who really love God and are his children, it is a delightful thought that he controls every thing. It is the happiest thing in the world to know that a wisdom which cannot err, and a love which cannot fail, are conducting us through the journey of life, instead of our own erring judgment. I wish we could all *feel* this, as well as know it. It is God's great gift that he is willing to bestow upon us all, if we constantly and earnestly seek it from him. The highest earthly station, and all that wealth can purchase, will bring no happiness compared with having our wills made one with God's will. If you obtain this, my dear friends, poor as some of you are, you might be objects of envy to many of the great ones of earth, who are wearied in the greatness of their way, not having yet learned the great lesson of submission.

"There is much, just now, which makes us

fear we are entering upon a winter of peculiar trial and difficulty. The high prices of provisions must occasion many of you great anxiety; and much care and economy will, I am sure, be required to make you at all comfortable. Though *all* departures from God's law must be followed by suffering, it seems that *war*—which cannot be engaged in without breaking most of the commandments of God and setting aside entirely the precepts of love and forgiveness of injuries—must be attended with great suffering to any nation that engages in it. God, who made the world, knows exactly by what laws it ought to be governed; and we cannot set aside those laws without bringing great sorrow upon ourselves.

“We shall all, I fear, have much to suffer from the present war; and I truly grieve that such a considerable share of this suffering must be borne by the poor. We must learn from it this great lesson, that it is an evil and a bitter thing to depart from God; and let it be an inducement to instil more carefully than ever into the minds of our children principles of love and kindness, teaching them, especially, to forgive injuries, as Jesus did, instead of revenging them, which he told us not to do.

Thus, when they grow up to have their influence as men and women, and to form a part of the great nation, they may in every way promote '*peace on earth, and good will towards men.*' I trust that He who hears the young ravens when they cry, and feedeth them, will at this trying season provide food for you and your children. For nothing is too hard for the Lord; and those among you who really love and trust God may derive the greatest consolation from the beautiful promise, '*None of them that trust in me shall be desolate.*'

"I was reading, a little while ago, about a young woman who was early in life deprived by death of her nearest relations, and whose lot was to live with people who were extremely unkind—indeed, even cruel—to her. She was a very amiable person, and unusually pleasing in her appearance. A gentleman, in a higher station of life than her own, was informed of her history, and, after a short acquaintance, made her an offer of marriage. The persons with whom she lived, instead of being glad at the prospect of such an improvement in her circumstances, were only the more exasperated against her; and, having the power, they refused to give her up until she was of age, and

endeavoured to make her more unhappy than ever. A friend once remarked to her that he wondered how she could bear such treatment. 'Oh,' she said, 'I hardly feel it, it is to last so short a time! I only think of myself as the future wife of Mr. ——.'

"I thought, directly, that this was just the spirit in which we should pass through life. We should then be brave of heart, and not disheartened at our difficulties. It is, indeed, a wonderful thought that the poorest and meanest being who toils upon the earth may be heir to a state of happiness and glory too great for description.

"But, though it is plainly our duty to cultivate this spirit of submission and trust in God under all circumstances, yet it is most important that we should endeavour so to provide against calamity that, if it comes, we may not have the pain of thinking how much our sufferings have been brought about by our own misconduct. God has so ordered things in this world that our success or failure will always depend much upon ourselves.

"It has been truly remarked that only in one relation of life is a choice left to us. You will see that I refer to the relation of hus-

band or wife. On this, however, more than on any other, depends our happiness and the happiness of those connected with us. You will perhaps say that in writing to those who have already made their choice, and whose position in this respect is unalterable, it cannot be of any use to make such remarks. But I feel (and you will feel with me) that in our children we live our own lives over again; and the more we have suffered from any particular mistake which we may ourselves have made, the more anxious we should feel to shield those dear to us from a similar misfortune.

"There are many people at the present time who are thinking a great deal about the suffering of the poor, and are trying to find out how it arises, and how it can in some way be lessened. One very general opinion is that much misery is brought about by early and imprudent marriages.

"One great difference between people in my position of life and in your's is that, generally speaking, before incurring the expenses attendant on married life, we wait to reap the fruits of many years of careful industry. We frequently defer marriage until both parties are even between thirty and forty years of



age, instead of taking this important step without making any provision for the future, and often before either the one or the other has attained the age of twenty.

"A lady once entreated a girl of eighteen to defer her marriage until she, or her intended husband, had saved sufficient money to provide a little comfortable furniture for their room, as well as to have a little money in hand to fall back upon in case of necessity. She pointed out to her what sufferings might arise in many ways if they did not follow her advice. The girl replied,—

"I think, if John and I don't mind it, nobody else need trouble their heads about it. If trouble comes, we shall just have to bear it; and it is nothing to anybody else."

"I happen to know the history of this family, and all that followed. Work was plentiful at first, and John earned pretty good wages; but Sarah—for that was her name—had married before she had learned how to make the most of money,—as you will suppose when I tell you that she had to *pay* for the making of her wedding dress. The husband soon found the public-house was more attractive than his dirty home and miserably-cooked

meals; and you know, after that happens, how fast the money goes. But the saddest part of all relates to the poor, unoffending, helpless children, who came one by one into this wretched dwelling. Their mother was not badly disposed, and had she spent ten years longer, before marriage, in learning how to provide for the wants of the body and to train the mind, she might have done better than many women; but, as it was, on the whole face of the earth the eye could scarcely alight on a more completely wretched spot than this one room, where, day after day, the father, mother and children suffered every thing that can enfeeble the body and degrade the mind.

“The united effect of cold, bad air, starvation and neglect was to consign seven out of nine of their children to the grave before they had reached their sixth year! The other two are, I believe, still living,—the inmates of a poor-housed,—their deformed and diseased bodies preventing the possibility of their earning their own livelihood. As they pass their suffering days and wearisome nights in that dreary abode, with *nothing* to hope so far as this world is concerned, how bitterly could they protest against their mother’s remark

that her imprudent marriage was nothing to any one else but herself! The father and mother are long since dead; disease, brought on prematurely by intemperance, cut short their lives before they had lived out half the time usually appointed to man on earth.

"I feel sure that most of such suffering might be saved, if mothers would try, from the first, to present this subject in a right light to their children. Much good may be done, too, by endeavouring to raise the tastes of young people so that they shall *like* to surround themselves with what is good and neat and comfortable; for this *feeling* belongs quite as much to your position in life as to mine. The only difference is as to the degree in which it can be carried out. Believe me, it is any thing but a *virtue* for a young couple to begin life together satisfied with just one room to live in, furnished with a bed stuffed with straw, a table, and a few broken chairs.

"I once had a servant who lived with me many years. At last she became engaged to a respectable young carpenter in the neighbourhood. Out of their joint savings the furniture was provided, and a comfortable room down-stairs and one above. When she was

telling me this, I said I supposed they were now ready to be married. 'No, ma'am,' she said; 'not yet. I want to have some nice curtains to my window, and a plant-stand; and if I stay here a few more months I can get that without touching the one hundred and fifty dollars I have in the savings-bank.' I admired and respected her much for her good taste and resolution. I need hardly say she is now an excellent wife and mother, and many pieces of furniture have been added to their little establishment since their wedding-day,—a bright contrast to those many cases in which, when the first difficulty arises, one thing after another is taken to the pawn-shop.

"There is another way in which some of you may do good; and that is, by trying to shelter and protect young girls more than is generally done. The character of a poor girl is quite as valuable as that of a girl in any other station of life, and ought to be as carefully watched over. By taking care so to arrange the work that no errands are left till after it is dark, or if, when going out in the evening cannot be avoided, you accompany them yourself, or get a friend to do so, much mischief and sorrow would be saved. I am

sure nothing would do more to raise the people of this country, and bring about a better state of things, than an improvement in the manners of young women.

"If we are ever to have such an improvement as I hope for, it will be obtained chiefly by the influence of mothers on these young people; and for their sakes, if not for our own, we should strive to get a taste for 'all that is good and beautiful and true.'

"In bringing this long letter to a close, you must allow me to thank you very much for all the kindness and sympathy you have shown me during my illness. I continually hear of your kind inquiries, and they are indeed pleasant to me. Thoughts of you have cheered many solitary hours, and I shall be delighted to come among you again. I have felt my absence from you to be one of the greatest privations which I have had to bear. I have now the bright hope before me of being able to take my place among you in about a fortnight from this time.

"Till then, believe me

"Your sincere friend,

"——— ———."

## CHAPTER XII.

## OBSTACLES: WHO SHALL REMOVE THEM?

There are who aid, when even statesmen sleep,  
With the soft voice of prayer.

EACH year's intimacy with the interesting people of whom I have written has afforded fresh information, so that I find myself embarrassed with a multitude of facts; and, after six years' experience, selection from the accumulation of details is the only difficulty. It would be easy to multiply scenes of interest equal to any already described; but, if enough have been given to awaken sympathy and stimulate to exertion, my object is accomplished. A few observations on subjects of great importance, not prominently brought forward in any of the preceding narratives, will be sufficient.

One of the greatest obstacles which meets those who are striving to improve the homes of the poor is the construction of their dwell-

ings. There are whole streets of houses in some neighbourhoods, whose appearance gives you the idea that they were originally designed for a higher class of people; and yet the builder must have known that the supply of such houses was already much beyond the demand, and that, if let at all, the inmates must be poor. Nothing, however, adapts them for this class of inhabitants. Five or six families may occasionally be found in one such house, with no more provision for health, comfort and decency than ought to be made for each one.

The houses professedly erected for the poor are still more deficient. They are sometimes built below the level of the street, so that the drainage is *into* them instead of *from* them. The basements are, consequently, fearfully damp, and the whole atmosphere, in every part of the house, is impregnated with the unwholesome effluvia.

The material used in buildings are so bad, and the workmanship so inferior, that the floors are always loose, and every thing seems constantly getting out of order. We have whole streets of small six-roomed houses let out entirely to the poor; so that three families

frequently live in one house. *There is no outlet to the air at the back of these dwellings, either by door or by window.* One long, blank wall is all that is to be seen. Frequent illness prevails among the inhabitants of these streets; and I can never forget the scenes presented there during the visitation of the cholera. I cannot bear to dwell upon them; but, for the sake of my subject, I must mention one case.

In a small bedroom, on the top floor of one of these dwellings, I found, one morning, that a woman and a child had died in the night; and another woman in the same room, though still living, appeared in a dying state. I shudder when I think of that room. No pen can describe its horrors. It was a close, hot morning in July. Not a breath of air was stirring. The window was thrown up at the bottom; it could not be opened at the top; and, as there was no draught through the house to draw the air into the room, very little relief could be obtained. The dying woman was the mother of little children; and I would have given any thing to save her. The only possible expedient that suggested itself to me was to have some of the bricks forced out of the back wall. This was done;



but all was in vain: the poor mother died, surviving her husband only a few days; and the little children either cried in the street, or were cared for by a neighbour, till they were taken away to the poor-house.

As I left that street, I could think only of the words, "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed." The contrivances of men seemed so fraught with destruction that, if it were not for the interposition of God, the consequences would be still more disastrous.

I sat down as soon as I reached home, and wrote a letter to the newspapers, describing the scenes I had witnessed that morning, calling attention particularly to the construction of those houses, and then asked, in the bitterness of my heart, if, with all our extensive and costly paraphernalia of government, nothing could be done to stop this awful waste of comfort, health and life. The importance of the subject at once commended itself. The narrative not only appeared, but was backed by every argument and appeal that the editors could bring to bear upon it. But there it ended: no steps have been taken to forbid the construction of such dwellings. Many fathers, mothers, and children too, have since died in

those very streets,—only, in these cases, by lingering fever, instead of by sudden cholera. Surely the cries of distress must have ascended again and again, and have “entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth”!

But there is still a darker side to this grievance. The death of the few is less calculated to excite our compassion than the miserable, lingering existence of the many. When I see the little boys and girls playing before the doors, often with crooked backs or crooked limbs, with emaciated forms and faces, if not with still more unmistakable marks of disease, I cannot help thinking, “Are these boys to be our future working-men, upon whose sinew and muscle we are to depend for cultivating our soil, working in our shops, constructing our railways, sinking our mines, and defending our country? and are these girls to be the mothers of the next generation?”

There was mercy, as well as judgment, in the punishment that followed the disobedience of our first parents. The sentence, “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread,” is not an unmitigated evil. The most active persons are generally the most cheerful; and the hard workers are usually happier than

the deep thinkers. But when the body, which God intended and adapted for labour, has, by the habitual violation of the laws of health during all its first years, become enfeebled and deranged, and necessity for exertion becomes a *painful* reality, then it may indeed be looked upon as a curse,—as “the dark cloud without a silver lining.”

There is a deeper meaning than some suppose in that constant application for “light places” of which we hear so much. Some tell us it is all indolence; and thus on the surface it often appears. But surely there must be some cause even for indolence. A child of good constitution, and whose health has been judiciously cared for, becomes, as soon as he is able to manifest his power, almost inconveniently active. The nurse complains that “he will never bide still;” that she “can’t get a minute’s peace for him;” that “there is no end to the mischief he does.” Now, a child is not active from principle, nor because he feels it would be wrong to be indolent. He has not to be instructed to move, although he sometimes has to be taught to be still. Activity is the joy of his life, and would doubtless continue so, if it were not for the evil in-

fluences that are permitted to surround the body, marring God's beautiful work, and bringing down the dishonouring reflection upon the Creator that man, as he is constituted, is "not strong enough for his place."

A friend of mine was changing her residence a short time ago. She wished to retain throughout the day the men who were employed in removing her furniture: she therefore provided a dinner for them at her own house, to prevent the necessity of their returning home. Some meat-pies were warmed for them, which had been made the previous day; and this, with the addition of hot potatoes, made a nice dinner. As the men left in the evening, they thanked her for their good dinner, especially that she had taken the trouble to have it made *hot* for them; "for you see, ma'am," they added, "there is such nasty air in the places where we sleep, that we never care to eat when we get up in the morning, nor yet much at any other time, except it is made tasty, like, for us."

If such is the case, whence is the strength for labour to come? The workman's livelihood depends upon his ability to work. He may not leave off to rest because he is tired.

This is a sad subject; and it reveals to us the great source of intemperance. Is it any wonder that, if a man has a few pence in his pocket, he cannot pass the doors of a public-house without feeling a strong temptation to go in and purchase what, though imparting no strength, enables him to forget for a time the miseries of his existence?

There are two things which I cannot understand: first, that the government should do so little for the people in the way of sanitary reform; and, second, that the people should so seldom ask them to do more.

It would be interesting to go through the legislative reports of a year, and note what proportion of time the representatives of the people spend in doing or saying any thing that has reference to the moral and physical elevation or general well-being of their constituents. I am quite willing to acknowledge that my want of appreciation of what is actually done may arise from an inability to comprehend the magnitude and importance of other subjects to the country. But, granting this, may it not at the same time justly be said, "These ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone"?

I must confess that, up to the present moment, I cannot comprehend how *any thing* can be more advantageous to the country than the elevation of its own people. This need not, at the present day, be undertaken hopelessly. Enough has already been accomplished, through Ragged Schools alone, to show what can be done. Most of the evils from which our poor people suffer are, fortunately, removable. They do not arise from bad climate, unfruitful soil, determined hostility on the part of the governed, or determined oppression on the part of the governors.

The way in which the poor usually respond to efforts made for their relief, the patience and forbearance they manifest in times of public calamity, are most encouraging to witness, and prove that their hearts and hands are worthy of the assistance which an active and sensible government could extend to them. I cannot think of any thing, at the present time, that would be so helpful to the poor as suitable, well-adapted houses to live in. The miserable places which they are now compelled to call homes have a great deal to do with *all* the immorality that is to be found among them. No one who has taken the trouble to

investigate the matter can doubt this for a moment; and as long as there are people in the world unconscientious enough to erect such dwellings for the poor as those we have described, it must surely be a right and proper thing for the legislature to step in and say, "We will not stand by and see our people mentally, morally and physically degraded in this way: we interpose our authority, and insist that such-and-such modes of construction can no longer be permitted."

But we must also consider the other side of the subject,—the indifference of the working-classes themselves in obtaining assistance from their rulers. The fact is, they so seldom hear that any but purely political matters claim attention, that they can hardly realize the possibility of being helped by government out of any domestic difficulties. Nothing, however, can justify their vain clamour for what, if obtained, could in no way benefit them. I have often told working-men that, so long as they continue to ask for stones when they want bread, they must expect only to get stones.

I once witnessed a very exciting election, from the windows of a house at Bath. I shall

never forget the sight of that sea of human faces, which extended as far as the eye could reach. It was a cloudless day in July. The sun beat piteously down upon their heads: yet there they stood—this closely-packed mass of people—through the hottest hours of the day. A gentleman, who was witnessing it from the same window, was greatly troubled at the sight, and exclaimed,—

“I have no patience with them,—broiling themselves to death under the sun, and shouting themselves hoarse, for they don't know what. If there were any chance of their getting any good out of it, I might respect them for their powers of endurance.”

“Yes,” I said: “if, for instance, they were agitating that a law might be passed that all windows should be made to open at the top as well as at the bottom!”

“Just so,” replied my friend, “or that wages were always to be paid before four o'clock on Saturday afternoon. Yes, I could respect them for *that!*”

I am, however, induced to think, from much which I have met in my own experience, and also from what I have heard through other observers, that among the better class of work-



ing-men (a class whose value and importance to this country cannot be over-estimated) there is a sincere wish to avail themselves of the assistance of any helping hand held out to their relief. They have often confided to me their troubles, with the simplicity and earnestness of children, and have asked,—

“Do you think you could do any thing for us? We should be so glad if you could put us up to some better way of getting on.”

This subject is worthy of every attention even from those who take no higher ground than what will *pay*. How many of the victims of unhealthy houses are now crowding into our hospitals, asylums and workhouses, a burden to their country, living upon its wealth, instead of adding to it by their activity and skill! Sin and sorrow, in this world, are inseparable. Neglect and bad management have made the very class intended by a wise and kind Creator as the spring of the country's greatest wealth, to become a source of great trouble and expense.

If there is any doubt as to the *duty* of caring more for the poor, we have only to look at the example of Him who went about doing good, who, “when he saw the multitudes, had

compassion upon them." We cannot, like him, heal the sick and cleanse the leper; but by the use of appointed means how much heart-sickness and moral leprosy may be prevented!

If the government of this country would, in this way, follow the steps of "another King, even Jesus," doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God, then might we look for the fulfilment of the promise, "I will open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And now that dark clouds are rising around our political horizon, and many hearts are failing them for fear, is it not a time to turn unto God in the way that he has himself marked out?—"Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house: when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall spring forth speedily."

When we contemplate how great a change would be wrought in a nation were its rulers men fearing God and hating covetousness, and, like Daniel, going many times a day to ask counsel of the Lord, we seem to see the pen moving in the hand of the recording angel, as he writes, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper."

We must return for a moment to our own more immediate work. In consequence of the disadvantage to which we have alluded, we have not been able to effect all the improvement we could wish in the dwellings of our poor mothers; but, by the introduction of cleanliness, order and ventilation, the aspect of many homes has been much changed. Soon after we commenced these meetings, we spent the greater part of one evening in explaining the nature and effects of pure air and ventilation, and illustrating the subject in various ways. The listeners were startled at the facts brought before them; and, by their unfeigned expressions of astonishment, it was evident that their ideas on the subject, and nature's intentions, were quite at variance. Several months afterwards, on entering a house where two of our poor mothers lived, I was pleased

to observe how clean and well ventilated it was. On remarking this, one of the women said, "Ah! that was a wonderful evening when you told us all about what air we could live upon, and what we couldn't. I says to Mrs. L——, as we were going home, 'There, now, we have been a-shutting up our windows, and thinking we were shutting the *pizen* out; instead of which we were shutting of it in.' I soon got my window made to open at the top, and it has never been quite shut since; for we always sleep six in this room. The neighbours did say, at first, that we should catch our deaths; but they soon saw that we were so much better, that half the people in the street open their windows at the top now."

This same woman came to me a few weeks ago, and told me that she had lately removed into another street, where the houses were apparently of a better order than those she had left; but after the first week or two she found that, in consequence of a drain-pipe being out of order, they were constantly subjected to an unpleasant smell. "I tell my landlord of it," she said, "every Monday morning, when I pay my rent; and he always says to me, 'I'll send a man here in a day or

two, and have it put to rights;' and that have been going on now for six weeks, and nobody has been a-near the place to do any thing yet. I have two children ill with fever; and we all wake of a morning now with that old miserable, sick, tired feeling which we used to have before you told us how to manage better. My boys said, this morning, 'Mother, the work do seem so hard now, to what it used to.' You know, ma'am, the work isn't no difference; but we are all getting pizened with that nasty smell; and it do seem so hard to me; for I have never had no illness, to speak of, among 'em all, for the last four years."

At a very early period in our meeting we introduced a whitewash-brush. This is lent to any of the mothers who apply for it. It is very frequently out: indeed, in the spring of the year it is seldom at home. As many as seven or eight of these brushes have been worn out in the service of the society since its commencement. A thick iron saucepan is also kept at the house of one of our missionaries, and lent for the purpose of soup-making. Each member is supplied with a large printed receipt, giving particular direction for the composition of this soup.

There is one other subject to which I wish to refer, before laying aside my pen. An objection has sometimes been raised to the establishment of Mothers' Societies, on the ground that it is wrong to offer these poor women any inducement to leave their homes, that accidents may arise from their absence, that the husband may be dissatisfied, and so forth. A lady once reminded a working-man of these objections. He roughly replied, "What's the use of a woman being always at home, if she can't do nothing,—no good, when she is there? Now she does pick up something at the meeting, and we are all a sight better off the rest of the week for her going there a bit." Another lady, visiting at one of their houses, asked the husband how he liked having to remain at home and take care of the children while his wife was at the meeting. His reply was, "I should think, ma'am, that was little enough for me to do for all the good my wife gets there. She is always bringing home bits of clothes for some of us that she makes there, besides lots of things to talk about."

It must be evident to all that it is not possible for any mother to spend every hour of

her life at home. When, unfortunately, she is obliged to assist in the maintenance of the family, many hours of absence have to be provided for; and it is not more difficult to arrange for her absence at the mothers' meeting than anywhere else. Children, from the age of one to seven, are generally in bed before seven o'clock; older children are not so likely to get into mischief; and the baby, if necessary, can be brought with the mother.

It is not desirable, however, that uniform attendance should be indispensable. The illness of their husbands or children, and many other things that may arise, ought, of course, to keep the mothers at home. When they have come to me to apologize for their absence, as they frequently do, I have generally to say, "I should indeed have been sorry to have seen you here under such circumstances."

There is surely some want of sympathy in the hearts of those who continue to urge this objection. A lady once not only declined subscribing to the society on this plea, but said, also, it was all owing to the "miserable mothers that the servants of the present day were so bad; and she would not have any thing to do with such a set."

Those who can dismiss their children, at pleasure, to the nursery or the school-room, are apt to forget the sufferings of others differently situated, whose lives are worn down by one constant and unmitigated pressure. I have thought that one principal reason why the poor mother often fails so much in her duties is that there are no *pauses* in her work. The physical suffering and the weariness of spirit induced by this constant toil have much to do with that fretfulness of temper which often makes the homes of poor children wretched indeed. A cord strained too tightly and too long will snap at a touch that would otherwise have produced the sweetest music. The words of sympathy which meet the ear at these meetings refresh the wounded spirit. The thought is suggested that, painful and irksome as the work may often be, it is of God's appointment, and that to do it for him and with a view to his glory at once ennobles and sanctifies it.

A poor woman, whose heart had been renewed by divine grace, once said to me, "I used to think I was the poorest, miserablest thing in the world, always slaving about after my children; but now God has showed me



my work so different, that I wouldn't change with the parson."

The following letter, which I received from one of our poor mothers, will prove the truth of these observations better than any thing I can add:—

"POTTERIES, January 7.

"DEAR CHRISTIAN FRIEND:—

"It was very much my wish to have spoken a few words on Thursday evening, but was unable to do so: therefore, to pacify my conscience, I write to you, stating a few of the advantages I have received since I became a member of your society.

"1st. That of sympathy. If I have been in trouble and difficulty, you have ever lent a willing ear to my tale of sorrow, and led me to cast my care on Him who has promised to care for me.

"2d. That of training my children in the best way. Being obliged to work very hard for them, I have found little time to spare for teaching them; and, being reminded by you so often that a mother's voice, a mother's look, a mother's actions, are all noticed by children, I must say it has often influenced me to bear

with patience much that I should not have done, and offer a silent prayer for their welfare, and been more happy myself in thus acting.

"3d. We enjoy rest. Often with hurried step we hasten there, and the first sound that salutes our ear is the calm voice of prayer, which seems at once to hush the mind to peace, and carry our sorrows to a throne of grace, where we find relief and comfort.

"Again, there are the texts of Scripture, which often prove a word in season. Sometimes we have been very tired, by reason of the way; difficulties have beset our path, and every hour of the day has been full of care; and perhaps we hear those kind words, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.' 'Cast thy burden on the Lord, and he will sustain thee.' 'Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee.' We thus leave the place of meeting relieved from much that would distress us. I have thus written a few of the advantages derived from attending the Mothers' Meeting.

"Praying that a blessing may rest on you,

and hoping you will never grow weary in this work of faith and labour of love,

“Believe me to remain

“Your’s, most respectfully,

“\_\_\_\_\_”

Dr. Chalmers used to say that most of us think too much of our abilities and too little of our influence. The force of example is always great, even though the exemplar be a fool. A man of the narrowest intellect will accomplish more by personal conduct than the large-brained man will effect by mere verbal precept. It is true not only that

“A peasant may believe as much as a great clerk,”

but that he may *do* as much. Not only to hope and to faith are the “not many wise” called, but to charity also. We have seen in the preceding pages that our Great Master has made use of the humblest servants to achieve that which the professional philanthropist, with all his busy schemes, had not been able to compass. Therefore to the wise, who may chance to look into this volume, I would say, “Be not over-confident of success in undertaking the work of which I have

spoken. To charity, the heart is a far more necessary and vital organ than the brain. What you *do* will have twenty-fold the force of what you *say*. And, in order to do rightly, you must be content to learn of those whom you could teach every thing but this one thing." Those who are conscious of much intellectual weakness I would encourage by the narratives of what has been wrought by instruments of an even less keen temper than they.

But I would not be understood to slight the literature of philanthropy. Facts and figures, statistics compiled with much toil and difficulty, are the foundation-stones of all legislative social reforms. They are indispensable in all cases where we wish the government of a country to interpose.

Next, I would observe that we should "patiently wait" for results. There is a grand Eastern proverb which says, "Hurry is of the devil; but slow advancing comes from God." Hurry is not progress; sure progress is generally slow. It may not be given to us, who sow the seed, to gather in the harvest. But, if our faith is strong, we shall believe that hereafter it will be our great re-

ward to join the glad song of the heavenly reapers, as they lay the bounteous sheaves at the feet of the Lord of the harvest.

Finally, there is one thing that is in the power of all of us. However difficult it is to *do* our Father's will on earth as it is done in heaven, we can at least *pray* that His kingdom may speedily come; each may pray for those who are in "trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity."

"More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. \* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \*  
For so the whole round earth is every way  
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

THE END.

